AARP
The Magazine

All Aboard!

An Insider's Guide to Train Travel

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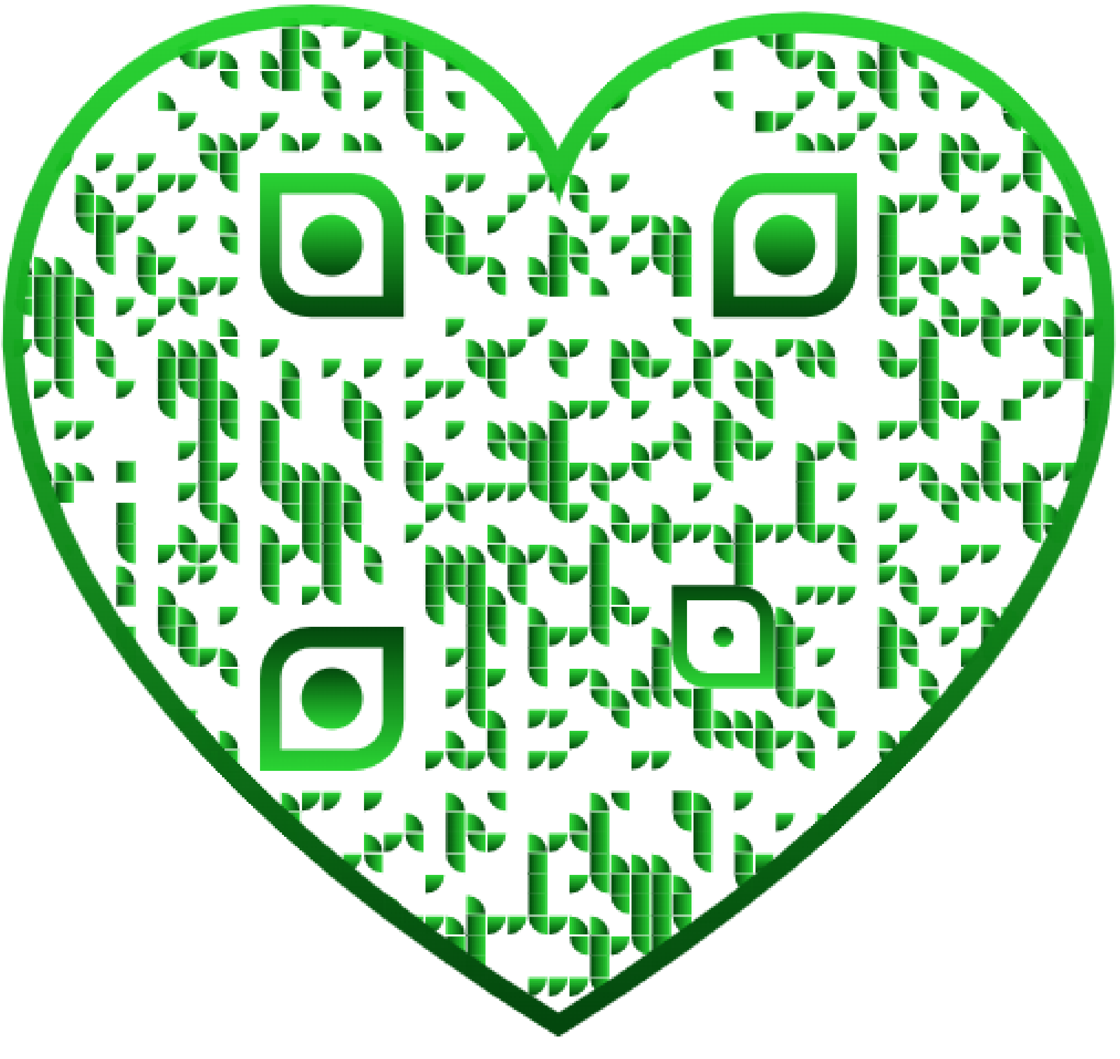
October/November 2025
aarp.org/magazine $4.50



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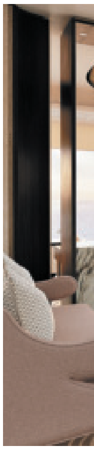

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Beginning in December 2026, 13 unforgettable inaugural voyages beckon, each with no more than 822 passengers. *Seven Seas Prestige*'s maiden voyage, 14-night *Felices Fiestas*, departs from Barcelona on a 14-night transatlantic sailing to Miami with calls in Málaga, Spain, the Portuguese island of Madeira, and Tortola in the British Virgin Islands.

The following two sailings explore both the Western and Eastern Caribbean. On the Eastern Caribbean cruise, *Azure Elegance*, travelers are treated to destinations such as Mexico, Jamaica, and the private island of Harvest Caye in Belize.

Prestige continues inaugural voyages departing from ports in Los Angeles, Panama City, New York City, Barcelona, London, and more. Depending on the cruise, destination discoveries may include the Cayman Islands, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Mexican Riviera, Guatemala, St. Thomas, St. Lucia, and Barbados. The two final sailings for this inaugural season will highlight the Iberian Peninsula and the West Coast of France.

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Several more delectable and thoughtfully designed options abound. Prime 7 is a Chicago-style steakhouse. Chartreuse offers Parisian-style fare. Compass Rose affords the opportunity to design your own meal. Pacific Rim presents Asian-inspired masterpieces. Sette Marie at La Veranda showcases authentic Italian specialties. Come as you are to the Pool Grill. And, of course, there's always room service.

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ALSO IN THIS ISSUE *Cheap beach vacations* **P. 14** / *How to reconnect with a distant sibling* **P. 31**

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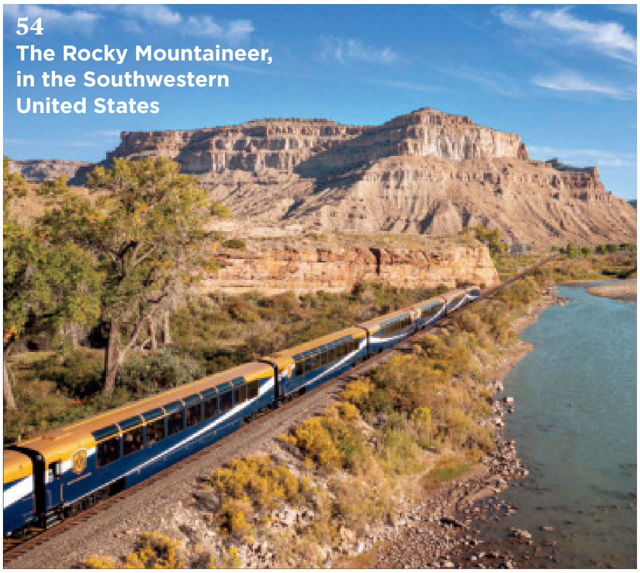

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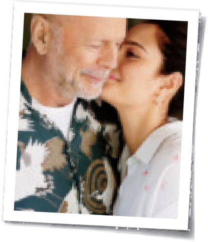

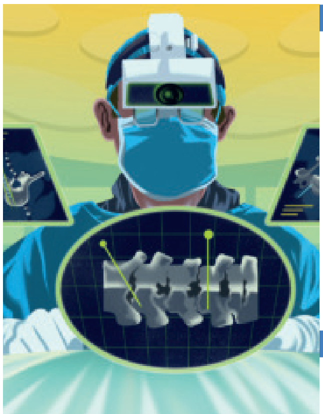

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ON THE COVER: Sylvester Stallone photographed for AARP by Jim Wright on July 24. Producer: Anthony Moschini at Moschini Productions; wardrobe stylist: Lori Stilson for Schneider Entertainment Agency; groomer: Fionagh Cush for Schneider Entertainment Agency. Inset: VIA Rail Canada

Photo and illustration credits on page 83

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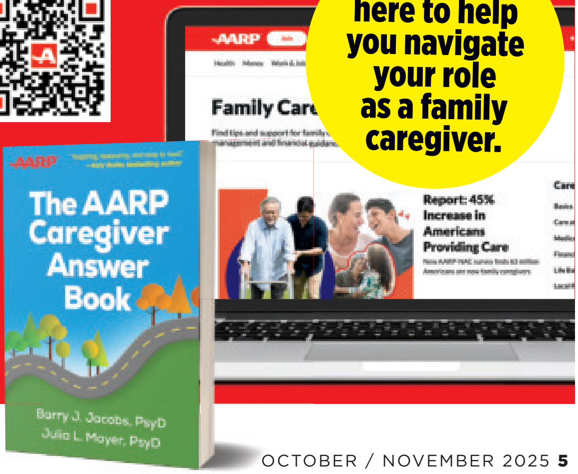
▶ AARP's **toll-free family caregiving support line** is available Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET: **877-333-5885**

▶ AARP's online **caregiving resources** cover financial, legal, life balance and practical needs, all in one place. Go to **aarp.org/caregiving** or scan this code.

We're here to help you navigate your role as a family caregiver.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The AARP Caregiver Answer Book
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Julia L. Mayer, PsyD

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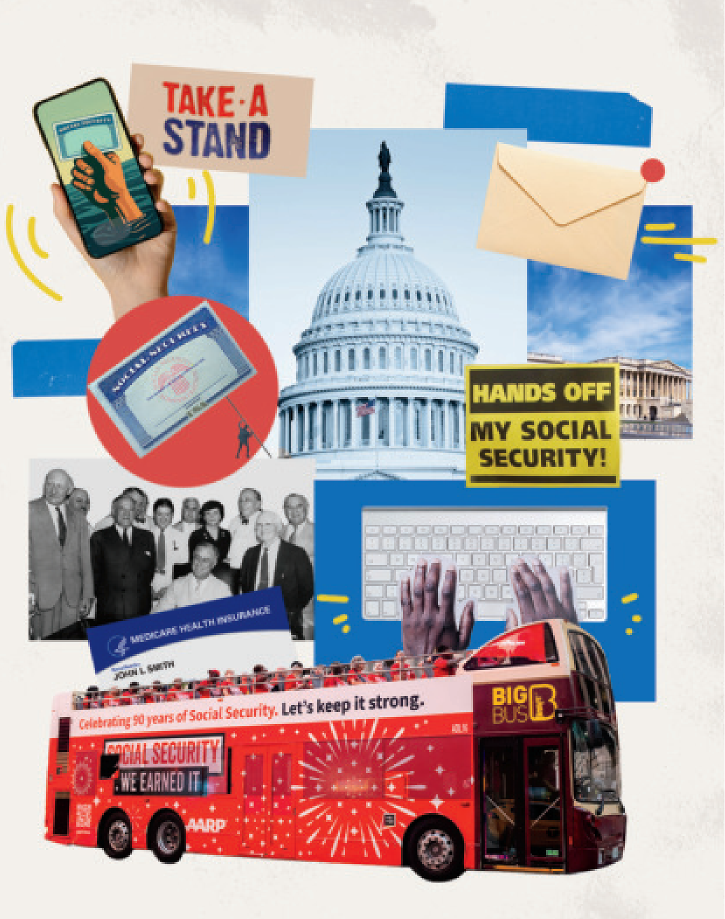
Defending What You've Earned

How AARP fights to protect Social Security and Medicare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JOHN L SMITH
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SOCIAL SECURITY WE EARNED IT
AARP
BIG BUS

THE NEWSPAPER called it a "Dessert Storm." In July 2001, AARP's volunteer advocates visited every member of Congress—all 535—and delivered each a layer cake with one slice missing. The message: It was Medicare's birthday, and the health insurance program had no prescription drug benefit. To AARP, this meant Medicare was missing a critical piece, and that's what the cakes symbolized. Two years later, in part because of long-standing AARP advocacy—including those attention-getting cakes—Congress passed a drug benefit, Medicare Part D, and President George W. Bush signed the bill into law.

Not every AARP member was happy about the victory, though, because of who had signed the bill. I remember some came to our Washington, D.C., headquarters and burned their membership cards. But throughout AARP's 67-year history, the organization has worked with every presidential administration, regardless of party, to protect and strengthen Medicare and Social Security, two programs that American workers count on to help them lead a stable and dignified life as they age.

As I write this note in August, AARP members tell us they're increasingly concerned about the future of these two programs. Some people are even taking Social Security early, although that means reducing their monthly payments for life, because they're worried about the future of the program. (Social Security is not going to run out of money, AARP experts say. To find out how to access your own Social Security payment information, see "9 Smart Financial Fixes You Can Tackle in an Hour," page 26.)

As a nonpartisan, nonprofit social mission organization, AARP does not get involved in any kind of partisan politics, whether pro or con. The association does not endorse parties or candidates, or donate to political campaigns. But when it comes to public policy, AARP is a loud voice for every American over 50. For example, early this year, the Social Security Administration threatened to end telephone service for certain types of claims. AARP pushed back, and the SSA ended up confirming that it would *not* end telephone service, though callers are still facing longer-than-usual hold times—a problem AARP is urging Congress to address. And with drug company lobbyists trying to limit Medicare's ability to negotiate lower medication prices, and the Social Security budget facing a 20 percent shortfall by 2033 unless Congress acts to close the gap, there's plenty more work to do.

Events on the federal level are moving quickly this year, and I don't know what changes may have come to Medicare and Social Security by the time you read this. But I'm certain of one thing: AARP will continue to fight for these programs, which workers in their 50s have been paying into their whole careers and which retirees have earned.

As an AARP member, you already support this crucial work through your membership dues. If you'd like to do more, AARP invites you to visit **aarp.org/ProtectThem**, where you can easily send an email on the issue to your congressional representatives and opt in to be notified of future ways to get involved. I can't guarantee there'll be cake in it for you, but I can guarantee you'll be fighting the good fight.

Meg

Visit aarp.org/advocacy for the latest on how AARP is working to protect Social Security and Medicare.

Photo credits: AARP (Rob Dobi; Getty Images, 4; Tatiana Lavrova/Getty Images; Luke Sharrett/Bloomberg/Getty Images; Dwight Nadig/Getty Images, FPG/Archive Photos/Getty Images; Mike Simons/Getty Images; Bryan Anselm)

TheMail

Our August/September issue featured Jamie Lee Curtis.

WHAT YOU'RE SAYING

Such a huge inspiration to all us women. Strong, beautiful and intelligent!! Thank you for being your true self. Great photo shoot as well.
urbaneventdecor, Instagram

Love Jamie. She is the real deal. She is a survivor, someone who shares her life stories to help herself and others.
chenoanow, Instagram

Jamie empowers me just being her! Adore that woman!
giannie_marie, Instagram

As one of an estimated 1.8 million Americans living with type 1 diabetes, I think you should have made it clear that this article relates only to [the potential onset of] type 2. Changes to your diet won't prevent type 1.

LYNN GAGNE
San Diego, California

DEBBIE GIBSON

I admit I do not know any of Debbie Gibson's songs. But seeing her wearing a dress showing Robert Freeman's iconic photo of the Fab Four impressed me a lot!

KEN EGEL
Petaluma, California

[Debbie Gibson] brought me through some rough times when I joined the Navy—kept me positive and looking for good times.

@92TULIPS
Instagram

CURTIS-Y CALLS

As a nearly lifelong fan of Jamie Lee ["The Liberation of Jamie Lee Curtis"], ever since I saw her in *Halloween*, I knew she was still extremely talented. But now I know she is still cool too. And an inspiration to all of us who aged with her. Go Jamie!

MICHAEL OWSIANY
St. Clair Shores, Michigan

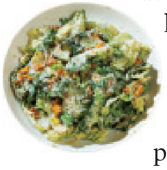
She made the pixie cut famous!

FELICIA JACKSON
Facebook

Jamie Lee is nearly the same age as me and also a SoCal girl. And she has lived authentically and genuinely, unabashedly confident and in charge of her life. I love her spunk! It wasn't easy for her to get there, but her perseverance has brought her to a place of peace, challenge, excitement and unbounded joy! Her compassion knows no bounds. I live vicariously through her. Blessings.

KAREN ANDERSON
Eugene, Oregon

EATING OUR WAY TO HEALTH



I've been a member of AARP since 2022, and the article "Cook Your Way Out of Prediabetes" by chef Bob Blumer is absolutely my favorite article. I recently received my own diagnosis of prediabetes, and Bob's friendly, humorous article is packed full of helpful information. His article helped me feel better and start planning my path to health. Now, when will you publish a book with these wonderful tips and recipes?

HILARIE QUISPE
Aurora, Colorado

KATRINA AT 20

Thank you for introducing me to the art of Willie Birch ["Lessons From Katrina"]! Such a talented and thoughtful man.

KAREN ROSSOW
Princeton, Massachusetts

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Clockwise from top left: Andrew Eccles; Daymon Gardner; Roger Kisby

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The A List

8 Surprising Things About Robin Wright

1 Screen envy all began with double features

My friend and I lived on Mulholland Drive in LA as kids, and we'd walk down to the local theater in Woodland Hills to see double bills, like Woody Allen's *Sleeper* with *2001: A Space Odyssey.* That was our big Saturday. Later, I started dancing and modeling, and that led to being cast in a couple of commercials, selling Doritos, Capri-Sun, Maybelline.

2 Her teen modeling portfolio was straight out of *Flashdance*

I had this big, black, zippered "book" I took on modeling auditions, with pictures of me in leg warmers and a high-cut, one-piece bathing suit—they were so 1983.

3 The *Princess Bride* cast are her forever family ...

We laughed so hard making that movie; we'd have to cut camera and start over again because it was such a giggle-fest. We took over the hotel, and Cary [Elwes] and I and Rob Reiner and Christopher Guest would all have a potluck dinner. It was going home with people you had fun with to play music, eat good food and commune.

4 ... but there will never be a sequel

Sometime after we hit the 30-year mark, the cast did a Zoom call, and a couple of actors were like, "We've been asked if we'll do a sequel," and I was like, "Well, a lot of us are going to be in a wheelchair." So no, that will never happen.

> **"I want to keep encouraging and amplifying women's voices, not just in our industry but everywhere. We have to stay on the bandwagon."**
>
> *—Robin Wright, 59*

5 Fans constantly yell out movie lines to her

I get "Run, Forrest, run!" and little girls who love *The Princess Bride* say to me, "As you wish." It's so sweet. Both films are so timeless.

6 After three divorces, she still believes in love

I'm such a romantic. We rebound, with a belief that it's still there and it can be achieved and how wonderful when it comes again.

7 She's very particular about what she doesn't want in a man

I don't want to worry anymore. I don't want to doubt, I don't want to suspect. I don't want all those things that we did in our 20s. I can't imagine feeling again what I felt: jealous, suspicious. You grow out of it like you grow out of a pair of pants.

8 She has a new sweetheart

I just got a black lab puppy, so that's taking up my whole time, and I just can't wait to wake up in the morning and be with him and train him.

—As told to Natasha Stoynoff

Golden Globe–winning actress Robin Wright stars in, directs and produces The Girlfriend, *a series now available on Prime Video.*

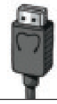
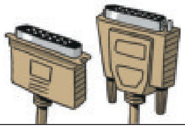
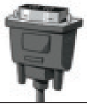
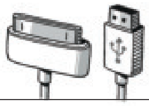
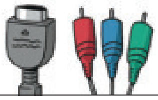
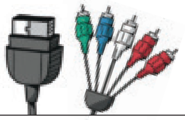
MEMBERS ONLY
For a video of Wright, visit aarp.org/robinwright or scan this code.

WireImage/Getty Images for Ralph Lauren

There's Money in That Box of Old Cables

Before you dispose of that knot of cords, separate the treasure from the trash

YOU MAY THINK those old electronics cords you've been hanging on to are useless, but before you get rid of them, check to see if you can mine them for some cash. Fans of classic tech have created a market for missing cables. Here are a few to look for (prices may fluctuate).

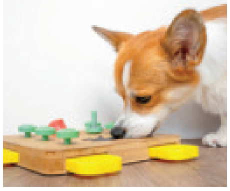
CABLE	LOOKS LIKE	RESALE VALUE
DISPLAYPORT	 Usually black and similar to an HDMI cable but with one angled corner (versus two for HDMI) on the connector on each end.	$5 to $150, depending on length
SCSI (SMALL COMPUTER SYSTEM INTERFACE)	Usually beige or black, with wide heads on both ends that have a small row of tiny holes or pin-like metal teeth. These cables can be round or flat. 	$18 to $50
DVI (DIGITAL VISUAL INTERFACE)	 Cord colors vary. Each end has a wide connector with rows of pins and two screws.	$5 to $45
APPLE 30-PIN CONNECTOR	White, with a base on one end about an inch wide and a USB connector on the other end. 	$5 to $15
NINTENDO GAMECUBE COMPONENT	 Gray, with the words "Nintendo GameCube" on one end and three prongs (red, blue and green) on the other end.	$150 to $200
XBOX HIGH-DEFINITION DISPLAY	Black, with a wide slot on one end and five prongs (green, blue, white and two red) on the other end. 	$60 to $90

WHERE TO SELL

There is one prominent online reseller (usedcable.com) that buys such products. Or you can list your items for sale on Facebook Marketplace, Craigslist, eBay, Etsy or Mercari. Used video game stores may buy gaming cables. You can also look for a vintage computer festival in your community to find prospective buyers. —Chris Morris

BRAIN GAMES FOR PETS

Because fetch and tug-of-war are so basic



WHAT TIRES out dogs more than physical activity? According to PetMD, it's mental stimulation. And an easy way to provide that is with a treat-rewarding puzzle toy.

With these toys, "dogs get to forage and problem-solve on how to attain their food, which is a very natural dog behavior," says Allie Bender, coauthor of *Canine Enrichment for the Real World*.

Cats can get in on the fun too. Bender recommends a toy that flips and moves: These turn your cat into "a little physicist, having to figure out the trajectory of where the toy is going to be after it flips. Plus, it's fun to watch."

—Maisy Fernandez

Prepare to Be Blown Away

There are many uses for a leaf blower besides the obvious

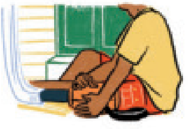
Easily cleaning debris out of your garage

Drying your car after a really good wash

Drying pavement after a storm

Getting rid of outdoor spiderwebs

Clearing snow from your front porch



Safely clearing out downspouts at ground level

Top: Getty Images (2); Cables (6): Elisa Leiva; Leaf Blower (6): Lucy Engelman

Give Them Pumpkin to Talk About

Enjoy autumn days with these savory recipes

By LESLIE QUANDER WOOLDRIDGE

↓ Thai Pumpkin Curry
“This curry—a perfect blend of creamy and spicy flavors—is nourishing and satisfying.” *—Jessica Randhawa, chef and food photographer at The Forked Spoon*

← Cheesy Pumpkin Grits with Grilled Shrimp Scampi
“Pumpkin adds creaminess and depth of flavor. Cooking it on the grill boosts the flavor.” *—Merry Graham, recipe developer and founder of amerryrecipe.com*

↓ Perfectly Pumpkin Hummus with Herb Drizzle
“When we think of hummus, we think of chickpeas, but this dish can be so much more when you add pumpkin!” *—Erin Fletter, CEO and founder of Sticky Fingers Cooking and author of* Farm to Table

↘ Chef Thivet’s Pumpkin Soup
“This recipe has the perfect hint of spices, such as coriander, cumin and chile flakes, which enhance the earthy flavor of the pumpkin.” *—Guillaume Thivet, executive chef at Grand Brasserie in New York City*

→ Sticky Rice Stuffing with Pumpkin and Chestnuts
“Many Chinese American families may serve a variation of this popular dish at Thanksgiving, next to the turkey and green bean casserole.” *—Pat Tanumihardja, coauthor of* Mortar and Pestle

MEMBERS ONLY
Find the full recipes online at aarp.org/pumpkindishes or scan this code.

PHOTOGRAPH BY WILL BRINSON

Cheerios with 8g of tasty protein.

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6 Healthy Ways to Top Toast

Celebrity chef and cookbook author George Duran shares six upgrades to your next breakfast slice

1 Herby Citrus, Avocado and Smoked Salmon
Bread: Sprouted rye
Toppings: Smoked salmon, avocado slices, grapefruit segments and a smear of Greek yogurt mixed with fresh dill and lemon zest

2 Roasted Tomato, Basil and Cottage Cheese
Bread: Whole grain sourdough
Toppings: Low-fat cottage cheese, roasted cherry tomatoes, balsamic glaze and fresh basil

3 Pear, Honey and Ricotta With Walnuts
Bread: Seeded multigrain
Toppings: Part-skim ricotta cheese, thin-sliced pears, toasted walnuts, a drizzle of honey and a grind of black pepper

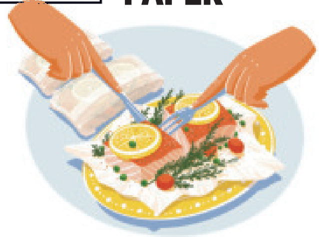
4 Pickled Beet and Egg With Arugula
Bread: Buckwheat or gluten-free millet
Toppings: Sliced hard-boiled eggs, thin-sliced pickled beets, arugula and a drizzle of Dijon vinaigrette

5 Hummus, Cucumber and Pomegranate
Bread: Sourdough
Toppings: Hummus, cucumber ribbons, pomegranate seeds and fresh mint leaves

6 Sweet and Salty Apple Peanut Butter
Bread: Multigrain
Toppings: Peanut butter, thin-sliced apple (ideally Honeycrisp or Gala), a drizzle of honey and sea salt flakes *—Lauren Dana Ellman*

TOP KITCHEN TOOLS

PARCHMENT PAPER



IT'S NOT JUST for lining baking pans. Use it for baking fish en papillote, in which fish, herbs, aromatics and wine are steamed in a paper packet. I'll also fill a parchment cone with melted chocolate or royal icing to decorate cakes and cookies. Chefs cut out a false lid, or cartouche, sized to fit inside a saucepan. Placed on top of, say, pears in their poaching liquid, the parchment disk keeps them submerged and traps steam. *—Trung Vu, chef-instructor at the Institute of Culinary Education's New York City campus*

Previous page: Food stylist: Frida Kristinsdottir, prop stylist: Mitch Shultz/Ether Artists. This page: StockFood; illustration by Tara Jacoby

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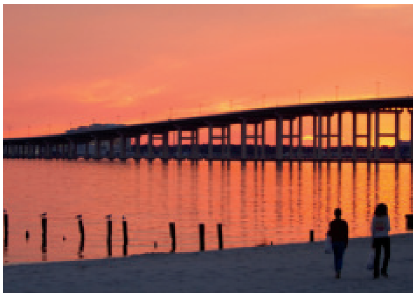
Honolulu's Waikīkī Beach and Diamond Head volcano

HIT THE BEACH FOR CHEAP

Enjoy winter warmth in these affordable and scenic seaside communities

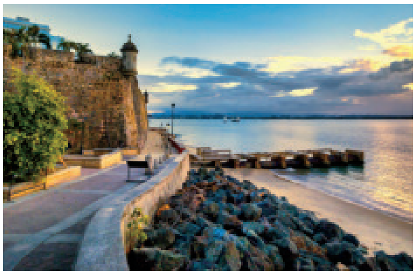
HONOLULU
This is the best place to find a bargain on the islands. Greet the sunrise at Diamond Head, the iconic volcano near Waikīkī Beach. Then visit Honolulu's historic downtown, including ʻIolani Palace, the royal family's 19th-century home.



OCEAN SPRINGS, MISSISSIPPI
Spend your days on the white-sand beaches, with views of the Biloxi Bay Bridge, dramatic at sunset. Learn about local ecology along the Davis Bayou Trail, which winds through a coastal forest, at the Gulf Islands National Seashore's visitor center.

FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA
Don't rule out one of Florida's top beach towns as too expensive. This is a popular destination for several budget airlines, so that reduces your cost. Travelers have multiple beaches to explore, including the busy Deerfield Beach, with its popular fishing pier.

GALVESTON, TEXAS
Visit Galveston Island State Park for hiking, seabird viewing and fishing. In town, tour some of the impressive mansions that testify to the port's early shipping wealth. Stroll the colorful Postoffice Street district for art galleries and antique shops.



SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO
This city's best beaches include Isla Verde and the restaurant- and hotel-lined Condado. For a culinary beach experience, visit Piñones, a nearby coastal area renowned for its street-food stalls. Old San Juan's colonial buildings date to the 16th century.

MELBOURNE, FLORIDA
The Indian River Lagoon separates mainland Melbourne from its barrier island beaches, popular with surfers and beachcombers. In several reserves along the coast, nature lovers can look for birds, sea turtles and manatees that populate the Canaveral National Seashore.

MYRTLE BEACH, SOUTH CAROLINA
Start at the 1.2-mile-long Oceanfront Boardwalk and Promenade, home to the 187-foot-tall SkyWheel. In North Myrtle Beach, take a free class in "shag" dancing, a style of swing dance, at Fat Harold's Beach Club.

—Elaine Glusac

Clockwise from top left: Sorin Colac/Alamy stock photo; Lumiere/eStock Photo; Thomas Kelley/Shutterstock; Grant Studios/eStock Photo; Getty Images; Simon Dannhauer/iStockphoto/Getty Images; David R. Frazier /Alamy stock photo

Bags No Longer Fly Free

All airlines charge for checked luggage, some more than others

SOUTHWEST AIRLINES was the last major carrier to offer free checked baggage to all fliers. Since that policy was rescinded this year, it's harder for your large suitcase to get there from here without fees. If you have elite status in an airline loyalty program, book a business- or first-class fare, or carry the airline's credit card, you can still get free checked baggage. But otherwise, "be sure to include those ancillary costs into the budget for your trip," says Sean Cudahy, senior aviation reporter at the Points Guy. See how standard bag fees compare for domestic flights. *—Nicole Council*

AIRLINE	FIRST BAG	SECOND BAG
Alaska	$35	$45
American	$35-$40	$45
Breeze	$35-$75	$55-$75
Delta	$35	$45
Frontier	$34-$99	$59-$89
Hawaiian	$30-$40	$40-$45
JetBlue	$35-$50	$50-$70
Southwest	$35	$45
Spirit	$54-$99	$74-$99
Sun Country	$32-$55	$45-$65
United	$35-$40	$45-$50

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Shoes Stay On!

NEW AIRPORT rules mean you may not want to pay for TSA PreCheck. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has ended the policy requiring shoe removal at airport security. With PreCheck, shoes could always be kept on. So now you may need that service to skip the main security line only if:

- You struggle with long periods of standing.
- Long lines cause undue stress or anxiety.
- Forgetfulness is an issue. Items taken out of a bag at security can get lost, says Sally French, a travel spokesperson at NerdWallet. *—Berit Thorkelson*

Phone, for Help

IN A CAR accident, your best ally is your smartphone: Document the scene. Take photos or video of your car and other vehicles or objects affected, says Sean Tucker of Kelley Blue Book. You can also record a voice memo to recount the events and use the Notes app to type in contact info for other drivers or witnesses. Connect with your insurance company; most have apps to report an accident, says Bob Passmore of the American Property Casualty Insurance Association. Be sure to download yours before you need it. *—Brett Berk*

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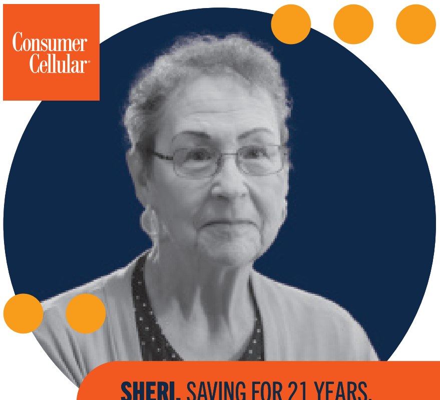
CALL TO WISDOM



SHERI, SAVING FOR 21 YEARS.
CONSUMER CELLULAR CUSTOMER & AARP MEMBER.

Paul: Sheri, you've been with Consumer Cellular for over two decades. In all that time, you never considered switching?

Sheri: It never crossed my mind. Consumer Cellular hasn't let me down in 21 years. I've watched friends jump from carrier to carrier, dealing with poor service and sky-high bills. Meanwhile, I have reliable service and low prices.

Paul: You put your coverage to the test during retirement. Tell us about that adventure.

"I'VE PROBABLY SAVED THOUSANDS OVER 21 YEARS."

Sheri: When I retired, I sold my house, bought a pickup and fifth wheel, and spent 5 years traveling the USA. Consumer Cellular service followed me everywhere and never failed me. That's when I knew I'd made the right choice. Plus, the savings have been incredible; as an AARP member, I get 5% off my bill, and I've probably saved thousands over 21 years.

Paul McIntosh is a Director at Consumer Cellular's Phoenix call center.

Looking to switch and save on your wireless, just like Sheri? Give us a call at **(888) 358-8523**

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From top: David Tran Photo/Shutterstock; Getty Images (3); AARP (Getty Images); icons: Noun Project

Insights From the Tech Guru

What I have learned in a year of dishing out digital advice

MUCH OF THE tech we're urged to use these days is "smart." We have smartphones, smart TVs, smart appliances and so on. Then why do they confuse so many people?

I see it all the time when writing my weekly Ask the Tech Guru column for Members Edition on aarp.org. Over the past year, I have received many questions from older adults who just don't understand smart devices.

I'm here to say that you are not the problem. Tech companies should use plain language, and in my experience, older adults are savvier about tech than they're given credit for. Many of us in our 50s, 60s, 70s and beyond have used computers in our jobs for years. More than 9 in 10 Americans over 50 have a smartphone. And older adults are active online.

But not everyone can know everything. The queries I've addressed run the gamut: how to bolster a Wi-Fi signal, recover missing smartphone photos, or retrieve messages that were ill-advised or sent prematurely. I've also covered how to figure out if your smart TV is spying on you.

When possible, I bring my own experiences into my guidance; tech journalists aren't immune from issues that plague readers. In a column on what to do if your phone gets wet, I related how I dropped mine into a sewer. (It survived.)

So please share your struggles with me (email: personaltech@aarp.org). I've learned there's no such thing as a dumb question. And yeah, that's me being smart. *—Edward C. Baig*

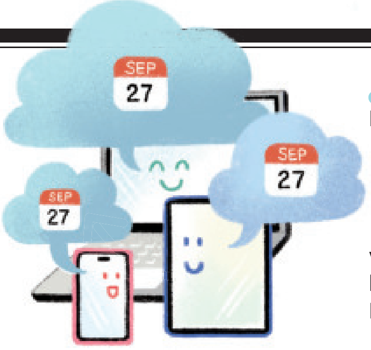
MEMBERS ONLY
Go to aarp.org/techguru to read Ask the Tech Guru columns and watch Baig's helpful videos.

GET IN SYNC

Access all your important info on every device

IT'S A COMMON problem: You have calendar appointments, notes and contacts stored on various devices, and those may not share information.

Ying Cheng, a contact center agent with Senior Planet From AARP, says the solution is to use a common digital "ecosystem" to keep info handy.



Google. This includes services such as Gmail, Google Calendar and Google Contacts, plus Google Keep (for notes). Just sign in to your Google account and enable syncing in Chrome on all devices.

Microsoft. If you use Microsoft services like Outlook, syncing is just as easy. Outlook handles contacts and calendars, while OneNote works well for notes—all linked through your Microsoft account.

Apple. Sign in to your Apple account. Then go to iCloud in your settings and make sure Contacts, Calendars and Notes are turned on to keep everything synced across your iPhone, iPad and Mac.

Gift Giving in a Digital World

GONE ARE the days of grabbing a holiday gift for a young relative at a record shop or video store. These days, they likely prefer a gift card for an online platform. "But make an effort to personalize it," says Daniel Post Senning, author of *Manners in a Digital World: Living Well Online*. Here's how:

Go beyond the obvious. Instead of Spotify or Netflix, look for special-interest services. A movie buff might love a subscription to the Criterion Collection of high-end films. A cartoon fan might enjoy anime streamer Crunchyroll. A music lover might like a gift certificate to indie platform Bandcamp.

Combine with a gift. Buy new headphones to go along with a music subscription or gamer snacks to pair with a Nintendo, PlayStation or Xbox online account.

Delivery makes a difference. "It's the thought that counts—and the effort that seals the deal," says etiquette expert Lisa Grotts. Include a video message in the email or send along a heartfelt text message as an addition. *—Lexi Pandell*

Tech Guru: AARP (Getty Images, 9; Stephanie Diani); Gift: Getty Images; Collage: Alamy stock photo (2), Everett Collection (2); Headphones: Getty Images; Illustration by Delphine Lee

Want free tech help from a real person? Call the Senior Planet Hotline at 888-713-3495.

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GEICO	$580
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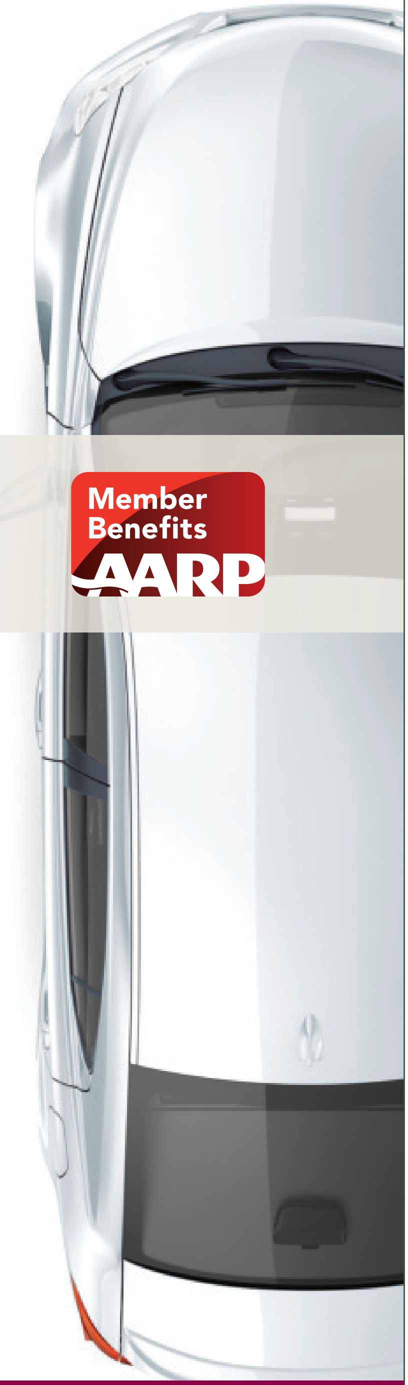

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[1] **In Texas, the Auto program is underwritten by Redpoint County Mutual Insurance Company through Hartford of the Southeast General Agency, Inc. Hartford Fire Insurance Company and its affiliates are not financially responsible for insurance products underwritten and issued by Redpoint County Mutual Insurance Company.**

[2] Average annual savings are derived from 6-month policy terms and based on information reported by customers who switched to The Hartford's newest rate plan between 9/1/22 and 8/31/23. Your savings may vary. [3] Terms and conditions apply. **Accident Forgiveness is not available to CA policyholders.** [4] Gift is a limited time offer and not available in all states. Email address required in most states. Allow 4-7 weeks for delivery. Bottle not included.

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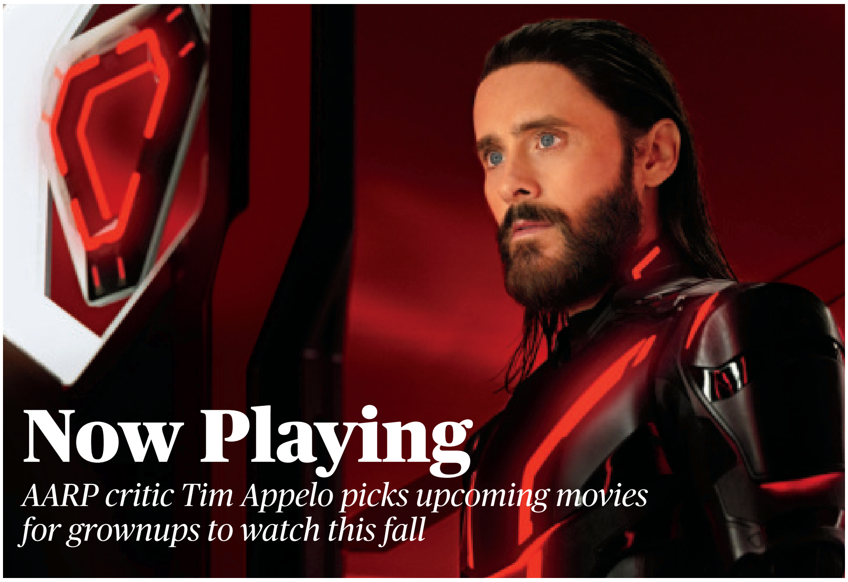
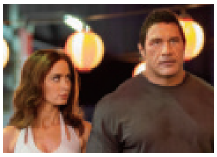


Now Playing

AARP critic Tim Appelo picks upcoming movies for grownups to watch this fall

TRON: ARES

In theaters October 10 • **Jeff Bridges, 75, is back as Kevin Flynn, designer of the digital universe Tron, in a sequel to the 1982 classic. Jared Leto, *above*, 53, plays an AI program named Ares, who rides a light cycle on a mission to the real world of humans.**



THE SMASHING MACHINE

In theaters October 3 • **In his most ambitious role, Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, 53, plays mixed martial arts champion Mark Kerr, whose tumultuous life was captured in a 2002 documentary of the same name.**

BLACK PHONE 2

In theaters October 17

• **Based on a story by Stephen King's son Joe Hill, 53, *The Black Phone* (2022) is about a serial killer who abducts kids. Now, the Grabber (Ethan Hawke, 54) is back as a scary ghost. As he tells his victim, "'Dead' is just a word!"**

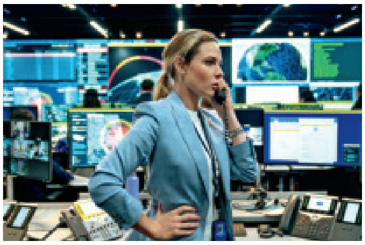
GOOD FORTUNE

In theaters October 17 • **An inept angel (Keanu Reeves, 61) meddles with people's lives, which appalls his mentor angel (Sandra Oh, 54).**

A HOUSE OF DYNAMITE

In limited theaters, on Netflix October 24

• **Kathryn Bigelow, 73 (*Zero Dark Thirty, The Hurt Locker*), directs an Oscar-buzzed thriller about a White House team racing to save the U.S. from a missile zooming our way. Idris Elba, 53, Jared Harris, 64, and Rebecca Ferguson, *right*, star.**



MOVIES FOR GROWNUPS

Visit aarp.org/MFGHotActors for our exclusive list of the hottest actors over age 50.

From top: Leah Gallo/Disney Enterprises; Ken Hirama/A24; Eddy Chen/Lionsgate; Sabrina Lantos/Universal Pictures; Eros Hoagland/Netflix

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	$10,000		$25,000		$100,000	
Issue Age	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
45–49	$10	$12	$15	$21	$39	$62
50–54	11	14	18	26	52	79
55–59	13	18	22	36	69	116
60–64	17	24	32	50	108	171
65–69	21	31	44	67	154	236
70–74	33	42	74	95	272	342

Cigarette smokers within the last 12 months will pay a higher rate. Premiums above are the rates New York Life currently charges. Your initial premium is based on your age at issue; premiums increase as you enter each new five-year age band and will be based on the current rates at that time. Age bands begin at ages 45–49 and end at ages 75–79. Coverage ends at age 80. Premiums are not guaranteed; however, your rates may change only if they are changed for all others in the same class of insureds. If relevant statements of age or facts are not accurate, New York Life will make a fair adjustment of premiums and/or insurance. Residents of FL: D. N. Ogle is a licensed Florida agent for service to Florida residents. Residents of MT have rates different from those shown. An alternate product with different rates may be available in NY. Please call New York Life for details and higher coverage options.

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* Ratings as of 5/19/25. A.M. Best (A++) Highest Rating, Fitch (AAA) Highest Rating, Standard & Poor's (AA+) Second-Highest Rating, Moody's Investors Service (Aa1) Second-Highest Rating.

** Apply online not available in all states.

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Star Stories

The season's big memoirs

Softly, As I Leave You: Life After Elvis ***by Priscilla Beaulieu Presley, with Mary Jane Ross***
Now 80, the actor, businesswoman and former spouse of the late Elvis Presley recounts her decision to part ways with the King and the deep loneliness, troubled relationships and eclectic career that followed. *(September 23)*

Truly ***by Lionel Richie***
The legendary singer, 76, offers detail-rich reminiscences about his childhood struggles with ADHD, the rise of the Commodores, the origins of the song "Easy," duetting with Diana Ross and more. *(September 30)*

Last Rites ***by Ozzy Osbourne***
Osbourne had no regrets before he died in July at age 76: "If it ends tomorrow, I can't complain," the heavy metal king wrote in his posthumously published memoir, which includes stories of his health struggles (Parkinson's disease, a neck injury) and reunion with Black Sabbath. Would he have changed anything about his life? "F--- no." *(October 7)*

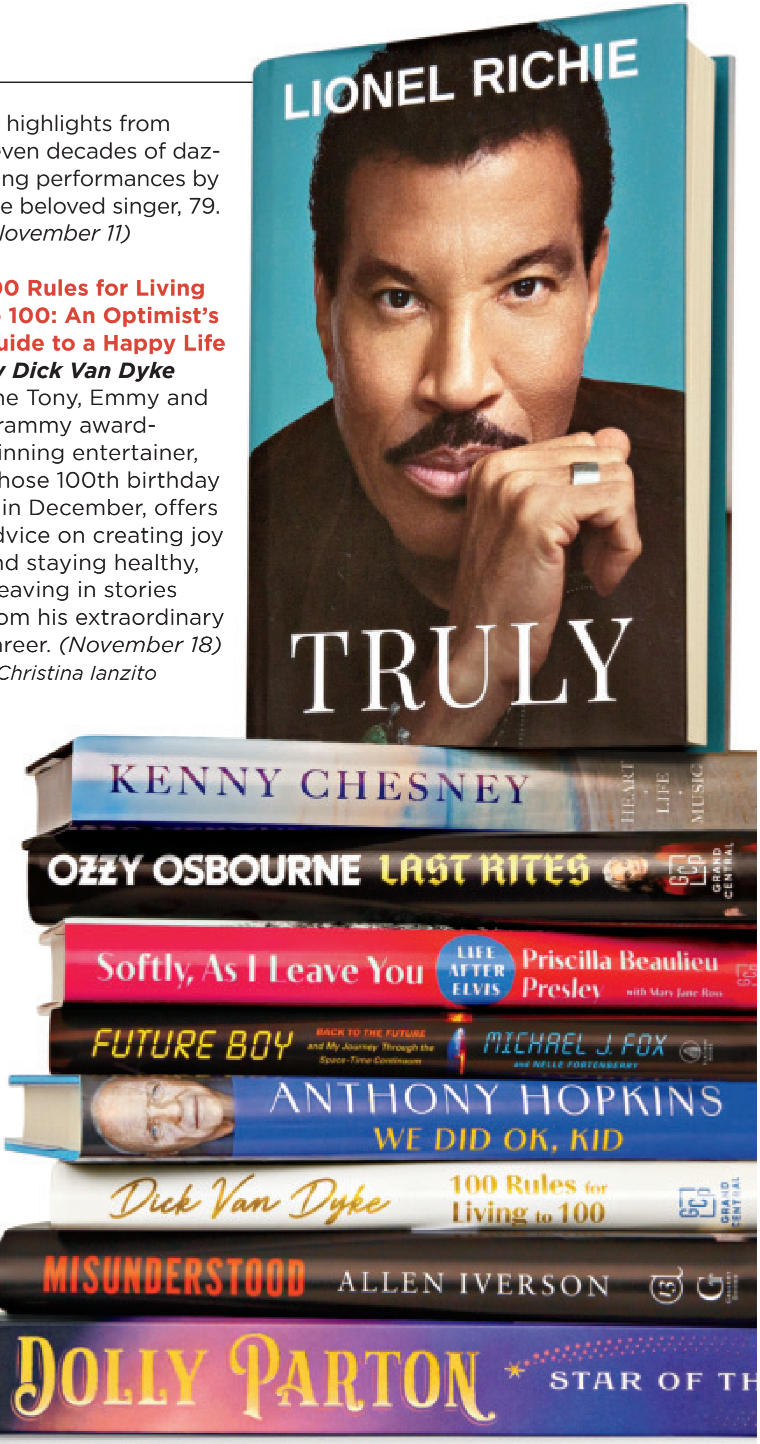
Future Boy ***by Michael J. Fox and Nelle Fortenberry***
The 64-year-old actor and advocate for people with Parkinson's disease (Fox was diagnosed at age 29) focuses on the heady period in the mid-'80s when he juggled two roles: Alex P. Keaton on the sitcom *Family Ties* and Marty McFly in the film *Back to the Future*. *(October 14)*

Heart Life Music ***by Kenny Chesney, with Holly Gleason***
Chesney, 57, describes his evolution from a kid in Tennessee and college bluegrass band member to country music megastar (and 2025 Country Music Hall of Fame inductee). *(November 4)*

We Did OK, Kid ***by Anthony Hopkins***
Knighted and esteemed, the British actor, 87, dishes about growing up lonely with a critical father and grim boarding schools that deemed him slow and hopeless. Then he discovered Shakespeare, and everything changed. *(November 4)*

Star of the Show: My Life on Stage ***by Dolly Parton***
The final book in Parton's photographic trilogy—following *Songteller* (lyrics) and *Behind the Seams* (fashion)—is a catalog of highlights from seven decades of dazzling performances by the beloved singer, 79. *(November 11)*

100 Rules for Living to 100: An Optimist's Guide to a Happy Life ***by Dick Van Dyke***
The Tony, Emmy and Grammy award-winning entertainer, whose 100th birthday is in December, offers advice on creating joy and staying healthy, weaving in stories from his extraordinary career. *(November 18)*
—Christina Ianzito


LIONEL RICHIE
TRULY
KENNY CHESNEY
HEART LIFE MUSIC
OZZY OSBOURNE
LAST RITES
Softly, As I Leave You
LIFE AFTER ELVIS
Priscilla Beaulieu Presley
with Mary Jane Ross
FUTURE BOY
BACK TO THE FUTURE and My Journey Through the Space-Time Continuum
MICHAEL J. FOX
and NELLE FORTENBERRY
ANTHONY HOPKINS
WE DID OK, KID
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STAR OF TH

The Tiny Slice

"I've made mistakes. Plenty of them. I didn't care for practice. It didn't mean enough, no stakes and boring. But I played every game like it was my last. Because I think I always thought it might be." *—From* **Misunderstood** ***by NBA Hall of Famer Allen Iverson, 50, with Ray Beauchamp*** (October 7)

NOVELS OF NOTE

The Impossible Fortune: A Thursday Murder Club Mystery
by Richard Osman (September 30)

What We Can Know
by Ian McEwan
(September 23)

The Black Wolf
by Louise Penny
(October 28)

King Sorrow
by Joe Hill
(October 21)

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Scarlett Johansson and June Squibb

After directing Squibb in a new film—and becoming her good friend in the process—Johansson chats with her fellow Oscar nominee about memory, grief and late-life success

Stephane Cardinale-Corbis/Getty Images

EARLIER THIS YEAR at the Cannes Film Festival, audiences celebrated an auspicious intergenerational pairing: the actress Scarlett Johansson (*Lost in Translation, Marriage Story, Jojo Rabbit*), 40, directing the legendary June Squibb (*Nebraska, Thelma*), 95, in *Eleanor the Great*. Along with themes of aging, loss and Holocaust survivorship, the film explores a friendship between two characters with a big age difference: Squibb's Eleanor and a 20-year-old woman. We invited Johansson to interview Squibb for us about her work and her life's wisdom. Here's what they had to say.

JOHANSSON: When we were working on *Eleanor the Great*, you worked all day, every day. You got bronchitis in the middle and still powered through. After a career on the stage, you started working in film at 61 and have been at it for more than 30 years. How do you prepare for your workday? Is it different than 30 years ago?

SQUIBB: I don't think it is so different. I've always had an energy surge when I needed it. When I was doing theater and musicals, I had it and still do. I put myself into a gear and off I go. And I know the script completely.

JOHANSSON: You know every line of your character before you even start? That's crazy. Where did your work ethic come from?

SQUIBB: The Cleveland Playhouse. I was 19. They pounded it into you: You did this; you did not do this. So when I went to New York—Broadway—in the late '50s, I took all of that with me. It's a decorum, a way of treating people, of treating your costume, everything. What I learned at the Playhouse is so much a part of me now.

JOHANSSON: How did you end up pivoting to film?

SQUIBB: I went to my agent and said, "I think I should be doing some film work." A week later, I had an audition with Woody Allen, and that was the first film I did, *Alice*. I just fell in love with him, and the job went on for a long time. I remember my

WANT MORE JUNE AND SCARLETT? **Visit aarp.org/JuneScarlett for an exclusive video of the actors, or scan this code.**

agent said, "There's a possibility of another job." And I said, "I can't take another job, I have to be there for Woody."

JOHANSSON: So, suddenly in your 60s, you have a whole new career.

SQUIBB: My second film was *Scent of a Woman* with Martin Brest, and I think it all kind of changed then. I felt, *I really want to do this*. I did Scorsese's *The Age of Innocence*. Then I did *In & Out*, a comedy.

JOHANSSON: If you could go back and do it again, would you have started working in film when you were younger?

SQUIBB: No, I think it happened exactly the way it was supposed to. I remember my years in theater with great love and joy.

JOHANSSON: What moved you about the *Eleanor* script when you first read it?

SQUIBB: The whole Holocaust thing. I was a kid during the Second World War and remember *Life* magazine, when they found the camps, the photos. It was so horrific to me that somebody could do this to another human. I remember it vividly—and this was 80 years ago.

JOHANSSON: Later you converted to Judaism.

SQUIBB: It was a long time ago in Cleveland. The temple was near the Playhouse, and I met with the rabbi two or three times a week. We really dug each other and would go off on tangents talking about the world, what we thought, everything. He would say, "June, we have to get back to Judaism." So we did, and I'll tell you, I knew more than my husband ever knew about Judaism. The rabbi who married us was very proud of me. Now, I did get a Jewish divorce, which was horrible. But going into it was great.

[Squibb remarried and then was widowed after a 40-year marriage.]

JOHANSSON: Your character, the Eleanor in *Eleanor,* has a close friendship with a Holocaust survivor who dies suddenly. So Eleanor more or less assumes her friend's identity and tells her Holocaust story. One of the themes is: If the person is not there to tell their own story, can we tell it for them?

SQUIBB: The world has to know. Eleanor believes that, and she has that line when she says, "It's not a real lie. It's not hurting anyone, so it's OK."

JOHANSSON: Eleanor has outlived a husband and best friend, and now she's sort of this invisible person. Grief and ageism are themes that are uncomfortable for a lot of people.

SQUIBB: But I think more people are, if not talking about it, thinking about it. I think we have much more interest in age now than we've ever had, because we're an aging society. Living into your 90s is nothing these days. We're looking at a future where the country will be full of older people, and we'll have to find out how to handle it, which I don't think this country does that well.

> **"Don't listen to other people! Have people around you believe in and trust, but make your own decisions. People making statements about what you should or shouldn't do—that's destructive."**
>
> —JUNE SQUIBB

Squibb as Eleanor

JOHANSSON: Society doesn't handle it well?

SQUIBB: I think we're learning. For example, the knowledge we're getting about retirement homes, different levels of retirement, that it's not just black or white. We're becoming more aware. The culture is shifting.

JOHANSSON: Eleanor has a special friendship with a 20-something character, Erin. What do *you* get out of friendships with people much younger than you?

SQUIBB: I learn a lot about what's happening in the world through younger people that I would never know. But regardless of age differences, it's the same relationship that I would have with anyone.

JOHANSSON: What do you wish you could have told your 20-year-old self when you were starting out?

SQUIBB: Don't listen to other people! Have people around you believe in and trust, but make your own decisions. I will think about what people say, but people in general making statements about what you should or shouldn't do—that's destructive.

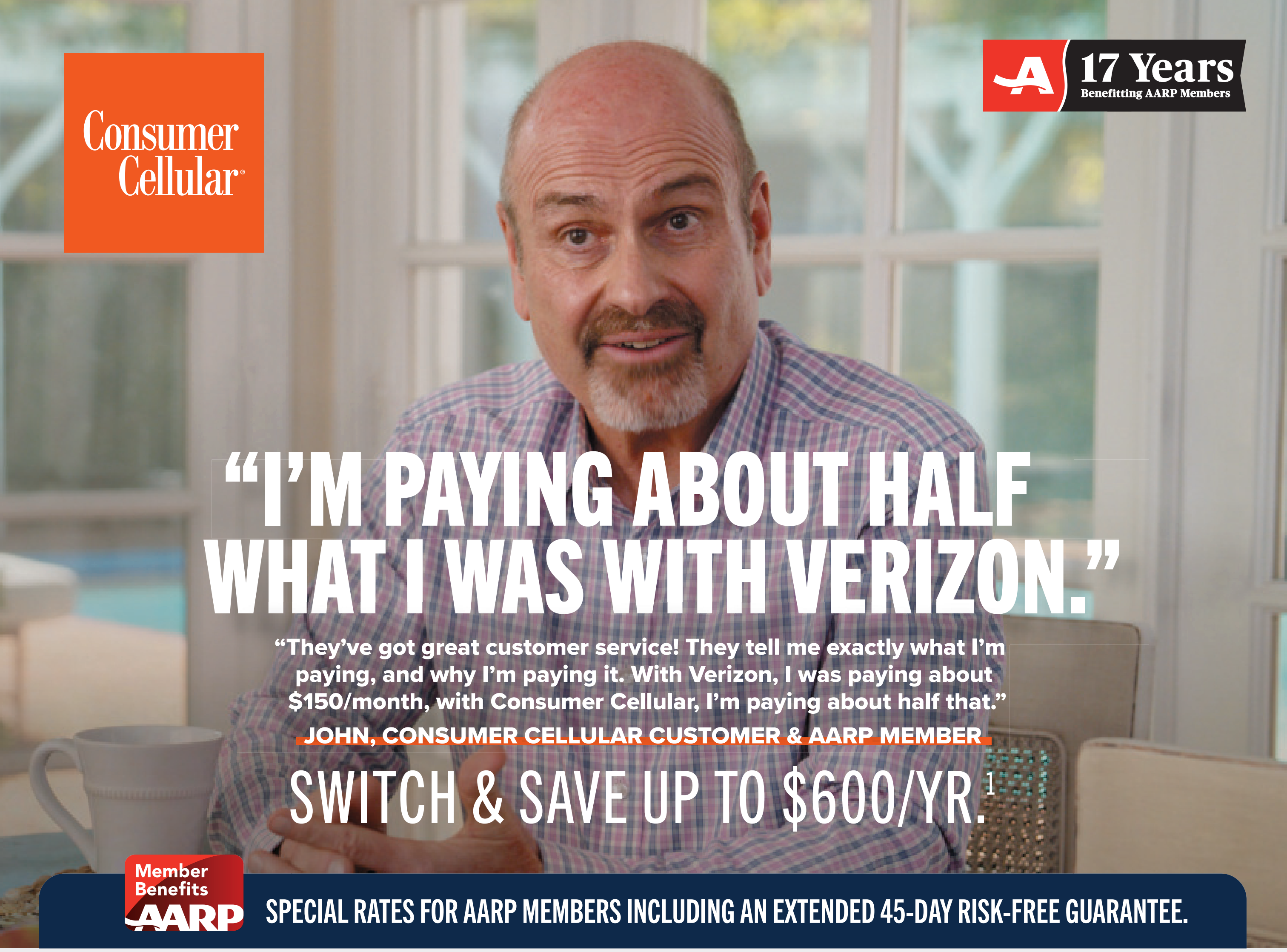
JOHANSSON: You're turning 96 in November. What else do you want to do?

SQUIBB: I've guest-starred on TV shows, but I've never done a series.

JOHANSSON: If an opportunity came up to star in something again, would you be up for it?

SQUIBB: Oh, yes. Physically, there would have to be things thought about. It couldn't be just "June runs in and out of a room." But yeah, I think I would be up for it. ■

From top: Sony Pictures Classics/Courtesy Everett Collection; Erik Carter



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SCAN TO FIND YOUR NEAREST RETAIL STORE.

MoneySaver

How Much Do You Know About Inflation?

Take this quiz to test your knowledge ... and gain a greater understanding of what we can't stop griping about

By GEORGE MANNES

1. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) measures the overall change in the prices of nearly everything Americans buy. A 5 percent annual inflation rate implies that the goods and services you bought for $100 a year ago would cost you $105 if you bought them today. What was the annual inflation rate in July, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), which calculates the CPI?

A. 2.7% **B. 3.2%**
C. 5.1% **D. 9.1%**

2. When people complain about inflation and rising prices, certain items tend to sit atop their list of expenses. As of July, which of these things has had the largest cost increase over the past five years?

- **A. Grade A eggs**
- **B. Unleaded regular gasoline**
- **C. Car insurance**
- **D. Rent**
- **E. Medical care**

3. The U.S. inflation rate is neither the highest nor the lowest in the world. Match each of these countries to its latest reported consumer inflation rate.

A. Brazil	**0%**
B. China	**2%**
C. Germany	**5.2%**
D. Nigeria	**8.8%**
E. Russia	**14.1%**
F. Ukraine	**21.9%**

4. In 1987, the BLS began estimating the cost of living for Americans age 62 and up, who tend to spend more money than younger adults do on health care and housing. Since then, the inflation rate for all Americans has averaged 2.8 percent on an annualized basis. What has been the rate measured for older Americans?

A. 2.7% **B. 2.9%**
C. 3.9% **D. 4.7%**

5. When inflation was below 3 percent in mid- to late 2024, the U.S. Census Bureau asked households how stressed they were about rising prices over the prior two months. About 21 percent of people with incomes over $200,000 said they were very stressed. What was the percentage of people with incomes of $50,000 to $75,000 who were very stressed?

A. 29% **B. 39%**
C. 49% **D. 59%**

6. "Shrinkflation" is when a product becomes more expensive because there's less of it in a new package sold for the same old price. (Think fewer paper towels per roll or 12 ounces per can of coffee instead of 16.) From 2019 through 2023, for which of these items did shrinkflation contribute most to its rising cost?

- **A. Cleaning products**
- **B. Coffee**
- **C. Paper products**
- **D. Snacks**

7. **TRUE OR FALSE:** If you have a fixed-rate mortgage and inflation starts to rise, it's a financial win for your bank.

8. A 2025 study found that people who'd seen or heard news stories about higher prices raised their estimates of how bad future inflation would be by 0.4 percentage points. How did people change their inflation estimates when exposed to stories about lower prices?

- **A. They lowered their inflation estimates a lot.**
- **B. They lowered them a little.**
- **C. They hardly changed them at all.**

TURN TO PAGE 82 FOR THE ANSWERS.

Photo illustration: Paul Spella; Getty Images (8)

9 Smart Financial Fixes You Can Tackle in an Hour

It doesn't take long to save money and protect yourself against fraud

By DANIEL BORTZ

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOMI UM

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SHORING UP your finances doesn't have to mean hours of slogging through statements, investments and bills. You have ways to improve your situation quickly. Got 60 spare minutes? Make that time pay off by taking on one or more of these simple tasks.

1. Check your credit report.
A recent survey from the nonprofits Consumer Reports and WorkMoney found that 44 percent of respondents who checked their credit reports spotted at least one error. Mistakes—such as a bill you paid being marked as outstanding—could be dragging down your credit score. Finding an unfamiliar account could help you uncover potential fraud, too.

"Accounts that don't belong to you are a major red flag," says Ted Rossman, a credit card analyst at Bankrate. "This could be identity theft or a mix-up, such as someone with a similar name."

Go to AnnualCreditReport.com to get a free copy of your credit report from each of the three major credit bureaus—Equifax, Experian and TransUnion—or call 877-322-8228.

2. Put your credit on ice.
Freezing your credit prevents credit bureaus from releasing financial information to third parties, making it harder for identity thieves to open accounts in your name.

And you are a juicy target. "Older Americans have often achieved higher credit scores," Rossman says, "but because they're not applying for as many loans, fraud could go undetected for longer periods of time."

You can request a freeze for free, online or by phone, in minutes by contacting each of the three credit bureaus. It's simple to temporarily lift a credit freeze so that you can open a legitimate account.

3. Sign up for an IRS identity protection PIN.
People ages 65 to 74 are at greater risk of large financial losses from tax-related scams, a 2025 survey by McAfee found. An identity protection (IP) PIN can help protect your taxpayer data from cybercriminals.

To obtain an IP PIN, register for an account with the IRS; visit irs.gov/ippin to get started. Once you verify your identity, you'll receive a six-digit number to use when filing your taxes. And you'll get a new IP PIN each year. "This will provide taxpayers with the peace of mind that, come tax time, no one else is claiming a refund in their name," says

! Visit aarp.org/99waystosave for more ways to cut costs.

Carl Breedlove, a research analyst at the Tax Institute at H&R Block.

4. Download a few grocery store apps.

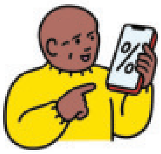
By downloading a supermarket's mobile app and signing up for its loyalty program, you get access to special deals and digital coupons.

"Grocery store apps are one of the most underrated savings tools," says Stephanie Carls, a retail trends analyst at the coupon site RetailMeNot.

Shop at several grocery stores? You might download Flipp, a free app that lets you select multiple supermarkets and browse their circulars. Participating stores include Aldi, Food Lion, Harris Teeter and Wegmans. Apps like Checkout 51, Ibotta and Receipt Hog let you earn cash back by submitting receipts on purchases from certain supermarkets.

5. Shop for cheaper auto insurance.

Car insurance inflation isn't going away. The cost of motor vehicle insurance was up 5.3 percent year over year in July, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.



TIP: Some grocery apps let you scan barcodes to see if deals are available.

Prices can vary among providers, so it pays to get several offers before renewing your policy. To speed up your insurance shopping, consider getting multiple quotes using a comparison site such as Insurify, Policygenius or The Zebra.

"All the policies that you review should have the same types and amount of coverage," says Loretta Worters, spokesperson for the Insurance Information Institute. "It is difficult to compare policies, for instance, if one provides $50,000 in property damage liability coverage and another only $30,000."

6. Apply for a low-interest balance-transfer card.

Nearly half of adults age 50 and up carry credit card debt, a recent AARP survey found. Moving high-interest credit card debt to a balance-transfer credit card with a low introductory interest rate—perhaps even zero percent—could save you a lot if you can pay off the balance before the introductory rate expires. "Signing up for a zero percent balance-transfer card is my favorite credit card debt-payoff tip," Rossman says.

Many balance-transfer card applications take less than 20 minutes, but

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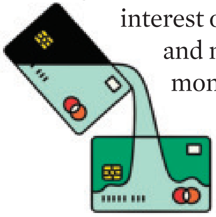
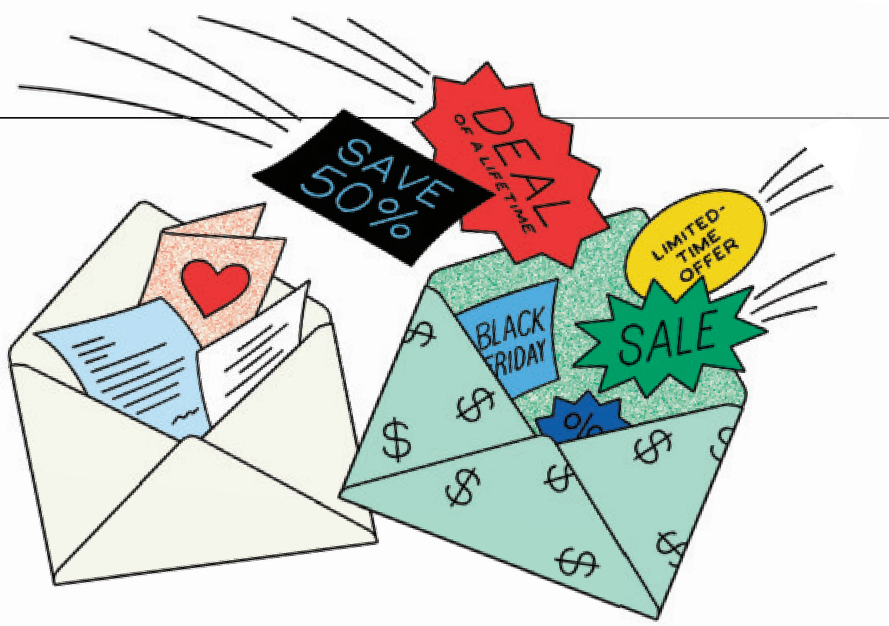


you typically need a credit score of about 670 or higher to qualify. Recent options include the U.S. Bank Shield Visa, which offers zero percent interest on balance transfers and new purchases for 24 months; the Wells Fargo Reflect, with zero percent interest on balance transfers and new purchases for 21 months; and the AARP Essential Rewards Mastercard and AARP Travel Rewards Mastercard from Barclays,* both of which offer zero percent interest on balance transfers for 15 months. With all of these cards, you will pay a fee of 5 percent on each transfer.



TIP: Simply signing up for email alerts can earn you an immediate discount from many retailers.

7. Search for unclaimed assets.

About 1 in 7 Americans have unclaimed cash or property, according to the National Association of Unclaimed Property Administrators (NAUPA). "Unclaimed property can be anything from forgotten checking accounts, payroll checks, insurance payments—even the contents of a safe-deposit box," says Shaun Snyder, CEO of the National Association of State Treasurers.

You can go to MissingMoney.com to find unclaimed property in states where you've lived or worked. In one shot, you can search 49 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico (to search Hawai'i, visit hawaii.gov). The free website, provided by NAUPA, also contains a national index with direct links and contact information for each state's official unclaimed property program.

8. Create an email account for shopping promotions.

Signing up for promotions, newsletters and other email communication from retailers where you shop regularly can get you many deals and discounts. But those emails could also lure you into spending money on things you don't really need. A better approach is to set up an email address specifically for shopping.

Doing this "is one of those small moves that can lead to big savings," Carls says. "It keeps your main inbox clutter-free while giving you first dibs on deals, exclusive codes and early sale alerts from your favorite retailers. It's a smart way to stay in the know without the constant temptation to shop every time you check your regular email."

9. Get online access to your Social Security information.

In case you haven't done so already, go to ssa.gov/myaccount to set up an online My Social Security account. If you are not yet receiving benefits, you'll get access to personalized Social Security data, including estimates of your monthly payment at different claiming ages. If you're already receiving benefits, you can use the site for additional tasks, such as changing direct deposit information.

To avoid scams, don't share your account credentials or login authentication codes with anyone. ■

Daniel Bortz is a personal finance editor at AARP.

One-Hour Strategies for Making Money

Consider these quick ways to raise extra cash

UNLOAD A GIFT CARD
You can sell (at a discount to face value) unused gift cards and store credit on marketplaces like CardCash, GCX, GiftCardOutlets and GiftCash. Some marketplaces, however, don't accept gift cards that have expiration dates.

TRADE IN A GADGET
Some retailers offer gift cards or store credit for used electronics, including laptops, tablets, cellphones, streaming media players and wireless routers. Amazon, Best Buy, Costco, Sam's Club, Staples, Target and Walmart all operate such trade-in programs.

USE YOUR TYPING SKILLS
Transcribe audio and video recordings of phone calls, conference meetings and courtroom hearings for companies like GoTranscript, Rev and Speechpad. Payment is usually a flat rate for each minute of the recording you transcribe.

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Jean Chatzky
TO THE RESCUE

Will Max Be OK Without Her?

A schoolteacher worries about what will happen to her adult son with autism

THE PROBLEM

Leaving a legacy for a child with special needs isn't easy. That's why Leslie Jarowey, 66, a retired New York teacher, reached out to me. Her son, Max, diagnosed with autism 25 years ago at the age of 5, lives with her in a co-op apartment. He can't hold down a full-time job; Leslie, newly worried about shrinking government assistance, wants to be sure that when she dies, she'll leave enough money for Max to be well cared for in their home. "I need his plan to be bulletproof," she says, "so that no one can misappropriate the money."

Leslie Jarowey with her son, Max

THE ADVICE

Preserving assets for people with disabilities is fraught. It requires trusts and accounts that support them but don't disqualify them from receiving government benefits. For help, I turned to Mindy Neira, a New Jersey–based financial adviser, and Andrew Cohen, a New York estate planning lawyer, both of whom work with clients who have disabilities. Leslie had three specific questions for them.

▶**Could she invest money left to Max by his grandmother?** Special needs trusts hold money that can be used for expenses not covered by government benefits, like education and travel. Max's late grandmother set up such a trust with $26,000 and named Leslie the trustee, giving her control over how the money is used for Max's benefit. As trustee, says Cohen, Leslie has not only the power but also the duty to invest the money, which has sat in the original checking account for years. But Leslie said financial advisers had told her the $26,000 didn't meet their client minimums. Neira suggested she open a trust account at Fidelity, Schwab or Vanguard, all of which have no minimums for trust accounts (unless the firm is the trustee), and that she put the money in a balanced or "all-in-one" exchange-traded fund or index mutual fund for easy diversification.

▶**Who are the best long-term trustees?** Leslie has established a separate trust for Max that will hold life insurance proceeds, the title to her apartment and any other assets remaining after her death. But she worries about who will succeed her as trustee. Neira suggested working with a nonprofit such as The Arc, the AHRC NYC Foundation or Cumberland Trust, all of which operate trusts for people with disabilities. Leslie would then name a friend or family member as a trust protector to preserve her vision for Max. Some of these organizations keep assets for multiple beneficiaries in one investment pool, but Leslie could have The Arc manage Max's trust separately, giving her and her successor more control over its investments.

▶**Will Max have enough money for the life Leslie wants for him?** To answer that, Neira studied Leslie's finances. Her assets: an untapped annuity of $220,000, a $250,000 insurance policy and her $440,000 home. Her liabilities: $23,000 in credit card debt and a $130,000 mortgage. Neira estimated that Leslie, who works part-time as a substitute teacher, could spare $1,000 to $3,000 of her cash flow per month, depending on fluctuating health care expenses; Leslie should pay off the credit card debt with that money, Neira said, then build up an emergency cash fund in a savings account. If Leslie and Max's medical costs rise significantly, she may have to tap her annuity. But even if she does, there should be enough money to support Max.

THE OUTCOME

"I'm absolutely going to pay down the credit card debt first," Leslie says. Then she'll split her savings between an emergency account and, to help cover apartment maintenance, the trust she set up. She also will explore The Arc. Leslie feels good now about Max's future. "When I was younger, my answer was: I'll just keep working," she says. "To have a plan is a lot better." ■

Want Jean Chatzky to write about helping you sort out your financial problem? Email rescue@aarp.org.

Jackie Molloy

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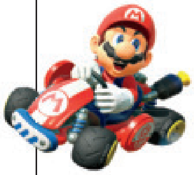
A-HA'S BREAKTHROUGH P. 32
A DIET FOR MENOPAUSE P. 33

A GROWNUP'S GUIDE TO THE SWITCH 2

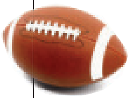
Nintendo is a part of Generation X's DNA, going back to Donkey Kong in the arcade, Super Mario Bros. on the Nintendo Entertainment System and Tetris on the GameBoy. Now comes the company's Switch 2, which was released in June and quickly became the fastest-selling console in U.S. history. A look:

GAMES TO TRY



Mario Kart World: This franchise has long been popular across generations. Hit the gas and go!

Puyo Puyo Tetris: Combines a tile-matching game with a classic shape-stacking game.



EA Sports Madden NFL 26: This uses AI to convert real NFL data into gaming attributes.

Donkey Kong Bananza: Guide the gorilla through a multilevel adventure. And smash a bunch of stuff along the way.

PROS

Fun for all. While the system can handle complex games, some of the most popular titles are fast, fun and easy to grasp.

Better hardware. The system loads games quickly and includes a sharp, 7.9-inch built-in screen.

Connect. GameShare via GameChat lets you play select titles against others online, with only one needing to own the game.

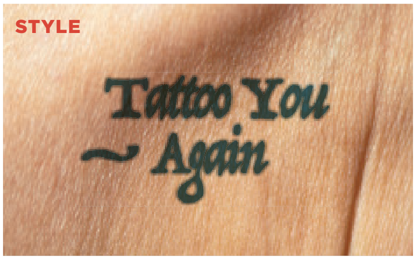
CONS

It's expensive. The Switch 2 starts at $450. And games can run up to $80.

Online issues. "Connecting with friends still has some friction points," says P.J. McNealy, CEO of Digital World Research. The process is a bit complex.

Game quality matters. Some downloadable games try to copy established titles. Research before you buy. *—Chris Morris*

STYLE



Ink you got way back when may be due for a refresh

WHEN SHE WAS younger, Joy Howeiler solidified her love for dragons by getting one tattooed on her right arm. After more than two decades, the image had become faded and distorted. A new artist "had to go over the entire thing, so it was a whole fresh look," says Howeiler, 52, of Spokane Valley, Washington.

People who were in their 20s and 30s during the tattoo boom of the '90s are finding themselves in tattoo parlors again—for touch-ups.

"Over time, you're losing collagen in your skin," says Maci Copeland, a Denver tattoo artist, "so the ink spreads out." *—Maisy Fernandez*

$23 trillion

Projected peak annual global spending of Gen Xers in 2035. This is the world's highest spending generation, according to a new report from NielsenIQ and the World Data Lab.

YOUR LIFE

HOW TO STOP TURNING INTO YOUR PARENTS

WHEN I SEE the Progressive Insurance ads where Dr. Rick teaches people our age how not to become their parents, I scowl. Then I think, *Scowling is what my parents would do.*

So how can we stop turning into our parents? I called my friend Daniel Levitin, a neuroscientist and author of *Successful Aging: A Neuroscientist Explores the Power and Potential of Our Lives,* to find out.

Embrace change. Because new stuff can be hard to learn, we might avoid it. But it's worth trying. Both Levitin and I have adopted new social rules popular with the younger set: We text first to ask if we can call … and we don't leave voicemails.

Soak it all in. Engage in activities that force you to interact with the outside world. Physical activities also help. Try pickleball.

Expand your social circle. Don't segregate by age. We can't live in a solely Gen X society. *—Joel Stein*

From top: Courtesy Nintendo (4); football and tattoo: Getty Images; Daniel Fishel

Patching Things Up After Growing Apart

What it takes to reconnect with a sibling despite years–or decades–of distance

FOR MORE than 35 years, Fern barely spoke to her older brother. There was no dramatic falling-out. Just a slow, quiet unraveling. The calls stopped. The visits ended. Birthdays passed without acknowledgment. Her children grew up without knowing their cousins.

Then one day, her mother left a voicemail: Her brother was in a dark place. Could Fern reach out? She left a message, thinking, *Fine. I'll probably never hear from him,* she recalls. "But two seconds later, the phone rang. It was him."

That one call cracked the ice. What followed wasn't easy—a year of tentative conversations, bike rides to avoid eye contact and continuing rocky patches. "But it was real," she says. "And for the first time in decades, we were trying. I had a brother again." (Fern's last name is not used in this story to protect the privacy of her family.)

It's notable that this reconnection occurred while Fern was in her 50s. Geoffrey Greif, coauthor of *Adult Sibling Relationships*, has studied more than 700 sibling sets, and while his research shows that 70 percent report serious ups and downs in their connection over the years, many pointed to their 50s as a turning point in repairing rifts. "At 50, life starts to settle," Greif says. "Careers are more stable. Children leave home. Parents fall ill or pass away. And in that stillness, something unresolved often stirs."

It should be noted here that not every estrangement should be mended. If a sibling was abusive and denies causing harm, or continues to make you feel unseen or unsafe, distance may be the healthiest option. But in most cases, the benefits of a strong relationship can make the effort worthwhile. Studies show that close sibling ties in adulthood can reduce loneliness, buffer stress and strengthen our sense of self. So what does take?

Identify outdated patterns: Repairing a sibling bond often means confronting what therapist Karen Gail Lewis calls "the ghosts from childhood"—the frozen images we carry of who our siblings used to be, the rigid roles we were assigned (the golden child, the black sheep, Dad's favorite) and the resentments that never fully cleared.

"You may be 55," Lewis says, "but your sister still sees 'little you.' And you still hear her as the bossy big sister." Lewis helped pioneer sibling-focused therapy and has worked with thousands of sibling clients over her five-decade career. Most are between 45 and 68. She says healing begins when you're ready to see your brother or sister not as a relic of the past but as an adult shaped by it.

Reach out gently: Rebuilding your connection doesn't require plunging into heavy conversations right away. Instead, reach out with a short, neutral message ("Hey, I was thinking about you and wanted to say hi"). That can open the door to communication without pressure, Lewis says. Simple gestures—remembering a birthday, sharing a photo—can chip away at decades of distance, Greif adds.

Keep the stakes low: Try meeting for coffee or a walk. If you live far apart, start with a short virtual hangout—maybe a "walk" where you both head outside with your phones and chat for 30 minutes, Lewis suggests.

Lead with curiosity: You already know your side of the story. This is your chance to understand theirs. Approach them without blame. Instead of "You never listened to me," Lewis says, try "What was growing up like for you?"

Protect yourself: Politics, parenting, old grudges—some topics may be off-limits at first. Agree to avoid any topic that might spark conflict. "That kind of boundary can actually make room for better conversations," Lewis says.

Give it time: Reconnection isn't a straight line, Fern learned. There will likely be delays—and setbacks. She and her brother have fallen out of touch again.

So if you're thinking of reaching out to a sibling, don't wait for the perfect moment. Just make the call. It might go to voicemail. Or, as Fern discovered, they might call right back. —*David Hochman*

ILLUSTRATION BY TARA ANAND

Managing Your Parent's Money

4 ways to ease financial frustration

AS HER MOM'S financial caregiver and estate planner, Beth Pinsker flew about 20,000 miles (10 round trips from New York's Brooklyn to Florida) and spent hundreds of hours on the phone sorting out money issues and more time filling out forms. Three years after taking on this challenge, and two years since her mom died, she still deals with paperwork. Pinsker wrote a book on her experiences called *My Mother's Money*. She shares her biggest lessons:

It's all about love: The work of a financial caregiver is to make life easier for everyone involved. So listen and help. My mom was obsessed with her funeral arrangements because she didn't want anyone to go through what she experienced when my father died: The cemetery dug his grave in the wrong spot, which we didn't figure out until we walked up to the plot for his burial.

Get a durable power of attorney: When somebody is sick, there are deadlines, and there's no time for months of court hearings—it's better to have documents already in place that allow you to handle their affairs. But be forewarned that banks in particular can still make it difficult to use power of attorney because of potential fraud. One estate lawyer I interviewed for the book had to sue a bank to get them to accept her client's designation.

Know your rights: I also had battles with Medicare, Social Security and my mom's long-term care insurance. What kept me going was thorough research of our rights. I fought the hardest when the rehab facility kept trying to discharge my mom even though she had Medicare coverage left. We won two appeals, and then I wrote the CEO a letter, and the orders to leave stopped.

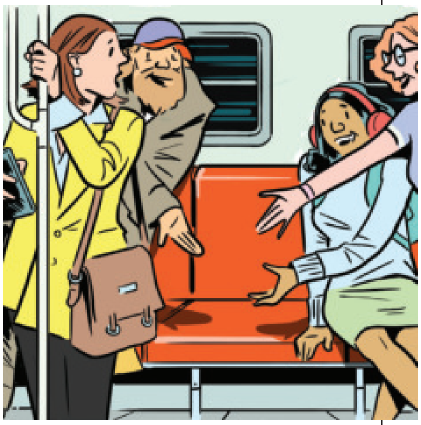
Do what's right: My mom was always frugal, but when I was in charge of her finances, I faced spending decisions that determined her quality of life. Was it worth $700 for an upgraded mattress for the hospital bed? Yes.

An A-ha Moment

With a stunning video, 'Take on Me' became a hit song 40 years ago

IN OCTOBER 1985, Norwegian trio a-ha topped Billboard's Hot 100 with "Take on Me." Its success was fueled by the song's music video, a combination of live action and animation in which a woman enters a comic book. But it almost didn't happen. "Take on Me" had been released the previous year with a less flashy video and failed to take off outside Norway. The band didn't give up, rerecording "Take on Me" and shooting that new video, which won six MTV Video Music Awards, including best concept video and most experimental video. "It was absolutely revolutionary," says veteran DJ Richard Blade. —*Craig Rosen*

My FIRST TIME ... ...BEING OFFERED A SEAT ON THE SUBWAY



A FEW MONTHS ago, on my commute in lower Manhattan, a young woman wearing a wide-leg jumpsuit, nose ring and fuzzy slippers offered me her seat.

Do I look that old? I'd just spent nearly 20 minutes spackling my sun spots, glossing my lips and ensuring that my cheeks had a dewy glow!

After an initial hesitation, I thanked the stranger and snatched her still-warm spot. I know the chances of winning the lottery are greater than being offered a subway seat at rush hour.

I learned that while pregnant in my late 30s. I was then working for *Seventeen* magazine, where I often camouflaged my bump so as not to alienate the boy band members and teen stars who stopped by for meet and greets. But during my daily subway slogs, I took the opposite approach, flinging open my maternity blazer and puffing out my abdomen. Surely a kind soul would let me rest my ballooning feet. No one so much as blinked.

I guess that's one reason why, when I scored a seat on a recent trip home, I gave it to the first pregnant woman I saw. I want to live out my remaining years in good health, so spending more time on my feet can help. But I've also learned that when offered a kindness, even one you'd rather not qualify for, you should accept it gratefully—and pass it on. —*Michele Shapiro*

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Clockwise from top left: Getty Images; Courtesy YouTube; illustration by Dave Urban

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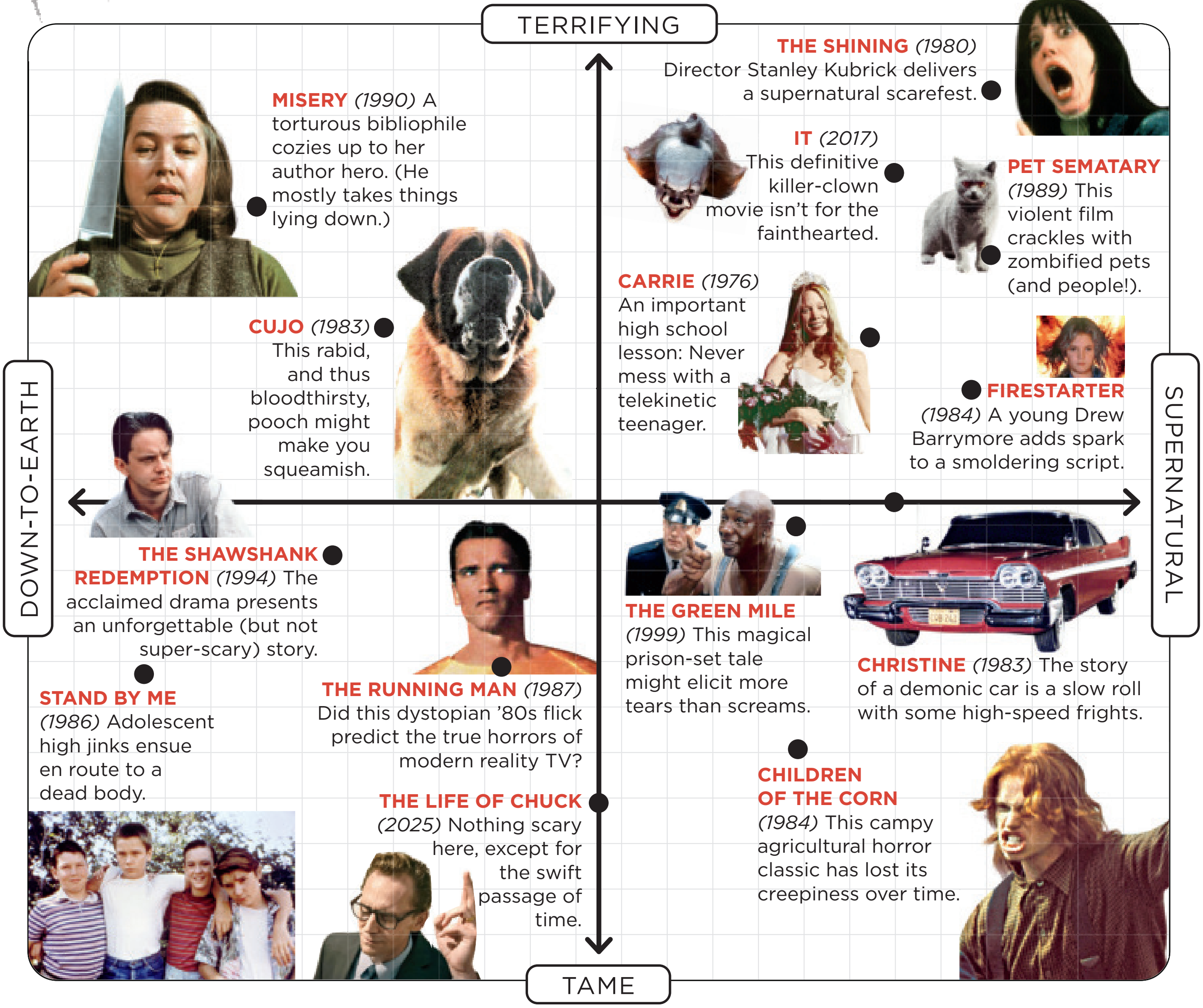
MASTER OF HORROR METER

A remake of *The Running Man*, starring Glen Powell instead of Arnold Schwarzenegger, is out in November. It's the latest in a long run of Stephen King feature films, which arguably peaked when we were in our prime fright years. A look back at King flicks based on these criteria. *—Whitney Matheson*



MISERY *(1990)* A torturous bibliophile cozies up to her author hero. (He mostly takes things lying down.)

CUJO *(1983)* This rabid, and thus bloodthirsty, pooch might make you squeamish.

THE SHINING *(1980)* Director Stanley Kubrick delivers a supernatural scarefest.

IT *(2017)* This definitive killer-clown movie isn't for the fainthearted.

PET SEMATARY *(1989)* This violent film crackles with zombified pets (and people!).

CARRIE *(1976)* An important high school lesson: Never mess with a telekinetic teenager.

FIRESTARTER *(1984)* A young Drew Barrymore adds spark to a smoldering script.

THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION *(1994)* The acclaimed drama presents an unforgettable (but not super-scary) story.

STAND BY ME *(1986)* Adolescent high jinks ensue en route to a dead body.

THE RUNNING MAN *(1987)* Did this dystopian '80s flick predict the true horrors of modern reality TV?

THE LIFE OF CHUCK *(2025)* Nothing scary here, except for the swift passage of time.

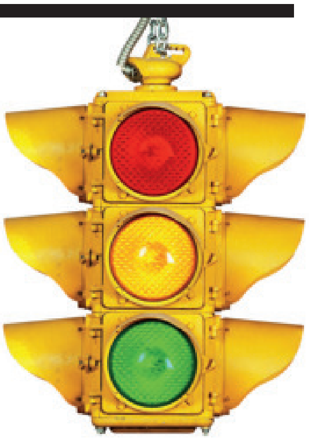
THE GREEN MILE *(1999)* This magical prison-set tale might elicit more tears than screams.

CHRISTINE *(1983)* The story of a demonic car is a slow roll with some high-speed frights.

CHILDREN OF THE CORN *(1984)* This campy agricultural horror classic has lost its creepiness over time.

3 FOODS THAT REDUCE MENOPAUSE WOES ...

... and 3 that can make symptoms worse



EAT THESE

1. Fruit: Strawberries, pineapple, melon, apricots, mango—these reduced hot flashes and night sweats in a study published in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.*

2. Soy: A plant-based diet rich in soy significantly reduces hot flashes, according to a 2021 study. Go for minimally processed soy, such as edamame, tofu and soy milk.

3. Dairy: Estrogen loss during menopause accelerates bone loss, according to the Cleveland Clinic, so eat calcium-rich foods.

NOT THESE

1. Spicy foods: These can exacerbate hot flashes, says Mary Dolan, M.D., a professor at the Emory University School of Medicine.

2. Coffee and cola: Caffeine can make hot flashes and night sweats worse, according to a survey conducted by the Mayo Clinic.

3. Carbohydrates and starchy foods: Avoid weight gain as your metabolism changes. The Cleveland Clinic suggests eating whole grains and legumes instead of pasta, white bread, potatoes and rice. *—Rachel Nania*

From top: Getty Images (1); Photofest (4); Everett Collection (10); Getty Images

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56	$24.35	$19.75	$47.70	$38.50	$71.05	$57.25	$117.75	$94.75
57	$26.00	$20.60	$51.00	$40.20	$76.00	$59.80	$126.00	$99.00
58	$27.05	$21.00	$53.10	$41.00	$79.15	$61.00	$131.25	$101.00
59	$27.25	$21.45	$53.50	$41.90	$79.75	$62.35	$132.25	$103.25
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An American Icon

The Sly You Never Knew

At 79, *Sylvester Stallone* opens up about his fraught childhood, his singular career and his struggles to remain relevant—even as his hit streaming show, *Tulsa King*, drops its third season

By Rob Tannenbaum PHOTOGRAPHS BY JIM WRIGHT

“**THE PROBLEM ISN’T** sitting down,” Sylvester Stallone announces as he slowly lowers himself into a treacherous-looking camping chair on the lawn of a waterfront estate in the Hamptons. “It’s getting up.”

It was a few weeks past his 79th birthday in July, and Stallone had left the East Hampton, New York, summer house he recently purchased for a reported $25 million (he resides mainly in Palm Beach, Florida) and come to a neutral spot nearby to talk about his life and career, including his Paramount+ series *Tulsa King* (in which he plays a fish-out-of-water crime boss) and his work on a forthcoming memoir.

Stallone has been one of Hollywood’s biggest earners, to use *Tulsa King*’s gangster lingo, for almost 50 years. He has been the star, and sometimes writer and director, of three film franchises that together have grossed more than $3 billion worldwide: *Rocky* (and its *Creed* spin-offs), *Rambo* and *The Expendables*. More remarkably, he has sustained that success across decades: *Rocky* launched his career in 1976 via the story of a hapless, turtle-loving Philadelphia boxer who’s given one shot at the heavyweight title; his biggest-grossing movie, *The Expendables 2*, opened in 2012; and *Tulsa King* first streamed in 2022. (Its third season started in September.)

Today Stallone is still physically imposing, with a narrow waist that flares into that battleship chest and shoulders. He’s somewhat reserved and stylish (in jeans and a Tom Ford dress shirt) without being flashy. Even when he’s talking about his insecurities and disappointments, he exudes confidence and an unflappable affability.

Rocky Balboa is such a famous and enduring character in the American consciousness—an archetype of an uncultured palooka—that anyone grunting, “Hey, how ya *doin’*?” in a slurred, working-class accent instantly conjures the character—and the actor. So I ask Sly if people

Sylvester Stallone photographed for AARP in Sag Harbor, New York, on July 24.

are surprised when they meet him.

"All the time. Quite often, they're stunned. They think I am Rocky," he says, chuckling, though it clearly grates. "They think, *He's dumb*, and it's hard for them to come off that."

Depending on how much you know about Stallone, lots of things about him might surprise you. For starters, in stark contrast to the Rocky and Rambo personas he is so often confused with, he's well-read—"Do you remember Kafka's *Metamorphosis*?" he asks later in the context of discussing *Tulsa King*—as well as a painter and art collector who has owned works by Claude Monet, Francis Bacon and Pablo Picasso. He wrote all six *Rocky* movies and directed four of them, cowrote five *Rambo* films and cowrote three *Expendables*, directing one.

Less well remembered is that he has had a rollercoaster career, bombing in some roles and movies and even wandering the Hollywood wilderness for nearly a decade in the late '90s and early 2000s, unable to get work. Yet he has always found a way to get back into the ring and, often, revive his career in box-office triumph. Indeed, in December he will be among those feted at the Kennedy Center Honors for his culturally important body of work.

Clockwise from top left: **Stallone in eighth grade; at college football; with son Sage on *Rocky V* set; in Las Vegas in 2024 with daughters Sistine, Scarlet, Sophia and wife Jennifer Flavin; at 1977 Oscars with then-wife Sasha Czack**

"I was surprised by what a great orator he is," says Emmy-winning actor Dana Delany, 69, who plays rancher Margaret Devereaux, the love interest of Stallone's character, Dwight Manfredi, on *Tulsa King*. "Since *Rocky*, he's understood the balance that makes a film star: a little danger, a little inaccessibility, but ultimately likable. You end up rooting for him. To me, he's one of the last of the stars. There aren't many people like him anymore."

I've interviewed Stallone before—during those rough, in-the-wilderness days—and what surprises me this time is how little he seems to have changed. Funny, sure of himself but not cocky—I'd almost call him winsome. Late in the afternoon, near the twilight hour, he lights a cigar, settles into his seat facing me and the becalmed Sag Harbor, and opens up about his singular journey to stardom and beyond.

'I Didn't Have a Childhood'

When Stallone was born, at a charity ward in the blue-collar Hell's Kitchen section of Manhattan, a forceps accident caused permanent nerve damage on the left side of his face. As a result, he has always spoken slowly, with a slight lisp, in a preternaturally low voice and with a kind of permanent snarl. Stallone's father, Frank, a hairdresser, and mother, Jackie, an aspiring entertainer who worked as a cigarette girl in a nightclub, both had violent tempers, and Sly and younger brother Frank Jr., who became a singer, were beaten regularly, sometimes with a riding crop. (Sly was taught how to ride and play polo by his father.) Stallone later found out that when his parents married, his mother was already wed to a man with whom she had a child. All told, she had four children with three men, though she denied it when Sly asked her about them. To hear him tell it, she was his first and most damaging critic.

SS: *My mother didn't want me. She said, "If you had any defect whatsoever, I would have put you on the windowsill and let you get pneumonia. And I'd be doing you a favor." And she thought that this was OK to tell me that. She was a narcissist with a borderline personality disorder. Also kind of witty, but in a wicked way, at other people's expense. And*

Previous page: producer: Anthony Moschini of Moschini Productions; wardrobe stylist: Lori Stilson for Schneider Entertainment Agency; groomer: Filonagh Cush for Schneider Entertainment Agency

Sly Stallone's 15 Most Memorable Roles

THE LORDS OF FLATBUSH (1974) Stallone's first big-studio role has all the striving and struggling.

ROCKY (1976) Yo, Adrian! This best picture Oscar winner remains one of the greatest underdog sports movies ever and sent Sly skyward.

VICTORY (1981) Stallone steps out of the ring and onto the soccer pitch for this rousing World War II escape thriller.

“I never bought that quote: **‘That which does not kill you makes you stronger.’ No, it leaves you pretty beaten up.”**

she hated affection. She couldn’t give it. She never hugged me, my brother—forget a kiss. My father certainly was not prepared to be a father. They really didn’t want children, and they had them and thought, So how do we get rid of them?

I was extremely hyperactive. So they sent me at age 2 to a boardinghouse in Jackson Heights [in Queens, New York]. Transients, salespeople, just in and out. I lived there for almost four years. I never went home, and my parents came maybe once a month for an hour. I didn’t have a childhood. It was just taken away. I was around adults all the time. So I started to talk to adults.

And I think it paid off further down the line when I got into writing stories. But I never bought that Nietzsche quote—“That which does not kill you makes you stronger.” No, that which does not kill you leaves you pretty f---ing beaten up, and you’re never quite the same. It made me more defiant, and, yeah, I might have learned something, but I left a piece of myself there—as we leave pieces of ourselves throughout our life when we have these different traumas—rough childhoods, death, divorce.

‘I Was Always Trying to Attract Chaos’

Stallone passed through about a dozen schools, compiling a record of fighting and failing courses, including finally Devereux, a Philadelphia-area school for emotionally troubled kids. He has joked that some classmates voted him Most Likely to End Up in the Electric Chair.

SS: *I was so disruptive. Once, they put me into a day camp, and when everyone went out for a hike, I went into the cabins and took all their pocket knives—25 of them! And they knew it. They’d say, “You took our knives! Thief, thief, thief!” And they kicked my teeth in. But I was trying to attract chaos because I couldn’t function if everything was copacetic.*

I finally channeled it when they put me in Devereux. That’s where the state would send the incorrigibles. We were not dangerous; we just didn’t fit in. It was 12 months a year. That’s when I really started to focus on art. I became quite proficient at it. They tell everyone to draw a horse, and you’d see: horse, horse, horse. “OK, that’s very good, Marvin. A horse.” And then they’d look at mine, and it was this contorted thing. They’d go, “That doesn’t look like a horse.” And I said, “That’s what the horse is thinking.” So I found a way to paint abstracts. That’s how I started to interpret and started to channel. I stayed there for two years and then eventually found an ad in the back of Popular Mechanics *for the American College of Switzerland. It was 89 students who were basically dysfunctional losers sent over there by their parents, like, “Get out.” I got in because they needed a phys ed instructor, and I lied on the application: I said I was a champion Golden Gloves boxer and this and that. But I wasn’t even athletic!*

I got into acting by accident, just joined the drama club. I wasn’t planning to be an actor. I love when people go, “Oh, I knew what I wanted to do at age 4.” Stop it.

‘Acting Is 97 Percent Guaranteed Unemployment’

A stage was the first place Stallone felt comfortable. “I wasn’t nervous,” he says in the recent Netflix documentary *Sly*. “I felt in control of the situation, because this comes easily to me.” He took his poor grades to the University of Miami, where he continued to study acting. After dropping out, he went to New York with nothing but lint in his pocket and slept where he could, often at the Port Authority Bus Terminal. Casting agents snubbed him, he says, because his birth injury made him ill-suited to play anything but goons and thugs; pre-*Rocky*, he was cast in mugging scenes with both Woody Allen and Jack Lemmon, in separate movies. Bigger roles came in *The Lords of Flatbush*—where he met and became lifelong pals with Henry Winkler—and *Death Race 2000*, but true success as an actor eluded him.

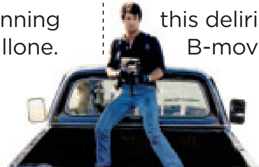
SS: *I had tried to pursue something that made me happy. But acting is 97 percent guaranteed unemployment. I might have had a career for 15 years as the second goon at the door: “Hey, boss, let me open the door.” I realized I was never going to make it as an actor. That’s when I decided to learn about writing. I was terrible. I mean, I still, today, don’t know what a pronoun is. I’m just still working on a verb. It’s an action word, right? Because it doesn’t matter in screenwriting. When you’re writing dialogue, the way you speak is as personal as your fingerprints. I just had that ear. So, my point is, I knew I was going to be a thug, and then an older thug, and then an unemployable thug. But maybe, instead, I could write a story about a thug who is not a thug. He’s really quite a broken man, kind, and just realizes he’s a failure.* →

Opposite: Clockwise from top left: Seth Poppel/Yearbook Library (2); Sygma via Getty Images; Getty Images for amfAR); Ron Galella Collection via Getty Images. Sly Stallone’s 15 Most Memorable Moments, Page 83

NIGHTHAWKS (1981) This underrated drama teams a bearded Stallone with Billy Dee Williams as cool cops.

FIRST BLOOD (1982) Debut of John Rambo in a surprisingly intimate film with a haunting, stunning performance by Stallone.

COBRA (1986) “Crime is the disease. Meet the cure.” Fashion-wise, peak-’80s. Stallone romps in this deliriously nasty B-movie pulp.



TANGO & CASH (1989) Stallone and Kurt Russell (with Teri Hatcher) take on the then-hot buddy-cop genre as bickering LAPD narcotics officers.

‘That One Comment Changed My Whole Life’

Stallone took a $35-a-week job as an usher in a midtown theater so he could watch movies over and over and study why they did or didn’t work.

In 1975, Muhammad Ali defended his championship against Chuck Wepner, a New Jersey boxer whose day job was selling liquor. The fight wasn’t supposed to last long, but Wepner, a 40-1 underdog, knocked Ali down—becoming one of only four fighters ever to do so—and lasted until seconds before the end of the 15th round, before Ali won on a TKO.

Stallone, by then married to his first wife, Sasha Czack, saw Ali vs. Wepner in a movie theater. He was already thinking about the screenplay that would become *Rocky*. But the first drafts featured a main character very different from the lovable underdog who eventually became an emblem of American grit and endurance.

Want More Sly?

For an exclusive behind-the-scenes video, visit aarp .org/slystallone, or scan this code with your phone’s camera.

SS: *Not many people know this—and I didn’t think about it for many, many years—but in the first draft of* Rocky, *he was not a nice character. He wasn’t even a boxer. He was just a thug. And at the time, my wife, who was typing the script on this crappy typewriter, said, “I hate this character.” She was teary-eyed, sad. That one comment from my wife changed my whole life. And I went, Holy f---. I need to change this paradigm and give Rocky hope, like he still has one foot in the game, maybe as a sparring partner. That opened up that gigantic world of all these other characters in the fight world.*

So when people say, “You wrote the screenplay in three days,” I say I wrote a spine. And then it just continued to branch out into something better, more empathetic. No, the original was rough.

I am actually writing a book now about the Rocky *thing. [*The Steps *will be published by William Morrow next year.] I didn’t want to go into my life after* Rocky; *that’s a different journey. That’s all the ups and downs, or where you make tons of mistakes. I said, I don’t want to go there. I’m not going to do a tell-all like Errol Flynn with* My Wicked, Wicked Ways.

‘Everything Is a Fight’

After he’d written some 15 drafts, United Artists wanted to buy the script and cast Burt Reynolds or Robert Redford as Rocky, but even though Czack was pregnant with their first child, son Sage, Stallone refused to sell unless he could star in it. The UA script offer reportedly went as high as $350,000—huge money for a chronically broke guy who had done a soft-core porn film because he needed the $200—but he held his ground, and UA cast him as Rocky, though for an initial fee of $35,000 for the script—plus 10 percent of the film’s net profits. *Rocky* grossed more than $225 million, Stallone got Oscar nominations for best actor and best original screenplay, and the film itself won three Academy Awards, including for best picture. There are few better examples of overnight success in Hollywood, even if it took years of striving to make it happen.

SS: *It’s interesting how this absolute going-nowhere human being, who was barely literate, did something miraculous. The odds of the film succeeding were millions-to-one. I’m an unknown, boxing is not a popular subject, it’s 25 days of filming on a million-dollar budget, and I didn’t know it, but at the Oscars we’d be going up against all these big political movies—*Network, All the President’s Men, Bound for Glory. *And what I found out is that people really want simple stories that reflect their own lives.* Rocky *wasn’t about boxing; it was a love story. He happened to be a fighter that people could relate to. Because everything’s a fight, every f---ing thing. From the day we take our first breath until we drop dead.*

‘I Believe in an Eye for an Eye’

In the flush of success, Stallone swore he’d never do a sequel. But that didn’t last long: *Rocky II* came out just three years later (there would eventually be five sequels), and Stallone’s next big sensitive-underdog-warrior franchise, the *Rambo* films, began in 1982 with *First Blood*, the saga of a hunted, misunderstood Vietnam vet. Stallone acknowledges that the extreme violence of much of his work may be directed at trying to understand his overly violent childhood.

SS: *I feel closer to Rambo than Rocky in many ways because he’s a scorned child. He’s rejected by America, his parent. “I did everything you wanted me to do, but I wasn’t good enough. And I came back and you want to bury me.” So I would fill* Rambo *with over-the-top violence. Actually, my season finales in* Tulsa King *are extraordinarily, unnecessarily violent. I want to make a statement that if you become my enemy, a quick death is too merciful.*

I really believe in an eye for an eye. And people go, “Oh, that’s horrible.” I don’t know if it’s healthy for me to feel that way, but I do.

DEMOLITION MAN (1993) It’s 2032. A cryogenically frozen cop from 1996 is thawed out to hunt down his nemesis.

CLIFFHANGER (1993) A vertigo-inducing ’90s popcorn movie has Sly tracking villain John Lithgow at high altitude.

COP LAND (1997) Stallone’s bid for awards-bait respectability, this is a subtler film than the star was known for, and he delivers an A+ performance.

ROCKY BALBOA (2006) At 60, Stallone got back into fighting shape and returned to the ring for a welcome—and final—match.

> **“My character? *He’s not going to be shot.* He’s not going to be run over. He’s not going to find a lump in his neck and that’s the end.”**

‘I Felt I Should Have Been Closer’

From the start, the *Rocky* series has paralleled and intersected with Stallone’s life. In 1990, for *Rocky V*, he even cast his son Sage as Rocky’s son Robert, who accuses his father of parental absence. “You never spent time with me,” Robert complains, and because Stallone wrote the dialogue, it feels like a confession on his part and an apology to Sage for not being home more often when his son was young. (Sage died at age 36 in 2012 of heart disease.)

SS: *In some of that dialogue, you can hear me apologizing. I felt I should have been closer to Sage. I don’t know if my reticence was a holdover from the way I was raised, but I truly regret it, and it’s something I have to live with. I can’t even watch the film. When people say they have no regrets, I want to laugh. Really? My God, I should have “regrets” tattooed across my forehead.*

‘Let Me Try One More’

He and Czack had a second son, Seargeoh, but divorced in 1985. Stallone then wed actor Brigitte Nielsen, a marriage that lasted two years.

When Stallone was 42, he met Jennifer Flavin, a model, in a West Hollywood restaurant. They married in 1997 and have three daughters—Sophia, Sistine and Scarlet—who appear with their parents in *The Family Stallone*, a Paramount+ reality show that launched in 2023.

Around the start of his marriage to Flavin, Stallone had agreed to forgo his usual $20 million fee to take on a more serious acting role in the crime thriller *Cop Land*. He hoped that by changing his voice and demeanor, and by packing on an extra 40 flabby pounds, people might better appreciate his acting skills. In a warm *New York Times* review, Janet Maslin said Stallone “holds the film together and emerges with a shrewdly revitalized career in store.” There was just one problem.

SS: *Nobody wanted me after* Cop Land. *Even my agents. I was fired from CAA. My personal manager at the time let me go. He said, “I can’t do anything for you. Nobody really wants you anymore.” And I go, “How’d this happen?” I was told these studios feel as though you’re not what you were. Time has passed. Your genre is over. For almost a decade, I couldn’t find work. My former agent, Ron Meyer, was running Universal Studios. And I would go in and say, “Please, I’ll take anything.” He goes, “I’ll try to help you, but it’s not up to me.” And that was it.*

So I wanted to go back to Rocky—I thought, Let me try one more, *because that was my safe place. But there I am, 60 years old, and the previous one,* Rocky V, *was an abject failure, so the original producers didn’t want to do the sixth film,* Rocky Balboa. *They said, basically, “Over our dead bodies.” Even my wife was going, “I don’t know if it’s such a good idea.”*

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 81)

THE EXPENDABLES (2010) Sly returned to the he-man genre … and brought pals. Like its sequels, a giddy, self-aware action orgy.

CREED (2015) The high-water mark from the back half of Stallone’s career was a return to his most beloved character—Rocky Balboa.

THE SUICIDE SQUAD (2021) Sly goes from Great White Hope (Rocky) to animated great white shark in this anarchic DC Comics’ supervillain mash-up.

TULSA KING (2022–) After 2024’s finale, how will Sly blast and bluff his way out? Payback will no doubt be brutal. *—Chris Nashawaty*

MEDICAL BREAKTHROUGHS 2025

THE BRAVE NEW WORLD OF AI

Artificial intelligence isn’t the future. It’s here now, and it’s already changing health care in profound ways. Here’s a look at the latest on AI-driven breakthroughs that are improving the health of older adults now—and what to expect in the years ahead

BY SARI HARRAR

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GLENN HARVEY

BREAKTHROUGH *Enhanced Cancer Detection*

Mammogram Readings Find More Tumors

An AI-assisted mammogram found McKeon's cancer early.

WHEN TERESA McKeon arrived for her annual mammogram in August 2024, she said yes to an extra, AI-assisted review of the images. It cost $40. "My sister was diagnosed with breast cancer at age 47," says McKeon, 57, of Sherman Oaks, California. "I have dense breasts, which raises risk. Breast cancer is something you have to stay on top of with every tool in the toolbox."

Her mammogram found tiny white calcifications in her left breast. A biopsy the next day confirmed that McKeon had ductal carcinoma in situ—cancerous cells in milk ducts. "It was very small, very early, very treatable," says McKeon, vice president of production at an entertainment marketing company. A lumpectomy last October removed the carcinoma before it could turn into an invasive cancer. After 25 radiation sessions, she now takes the estrogen-lowering drug anastrozole to reduce the risk of recurrence.

McKeon is one of more than 1.5 million American women who opt for an AI-assisted review of their screening test for breast cancer annually. AI doesn't create the mammogram images or replace the doctors who read them, says radiologist Jason McKellop, M.D., medical director of breast imaging in Southern California for RadNet and Breastlink. It simply provides a second set of eyes. "The ultimate burden falls on the human being."

Conventional screening mammograms miss 20 percent of existing breast cancers, according to the National Cancer Institute. "AI can provide meaningful benefit, especially for cancers that could be missed," says radiologist Manisha Bahl, M.D., associate professor of radiology at Harvard Medical School and a specialist in breast imaging at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. For a recent study, Bahl and her colleagues evaluated mammograms of 764 women, obtained from 2016 to 2018. They found that while the traditional, non-AI readings identified 73 percent of cancers, the AI-assisted system detected 94 percent, and did so with a significantly lower false-positive rate.

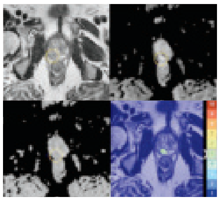
"Will AI for mammograms save lives?" Bahl asks. "We assume that AI will lead to improved cancer detection rates, which will in turn lead to better long-term outcomes for patients. But we currently lack the real-world data to support this."

In the future, AI reviews of mammograms may be able to determine which suspicious findings are likely to be cancer, cutting the need for biopsies for low- to moderate-risk patients in half, according to a 2023 study from Houston Methodist Neal Cancer Center. AI may also help track the success of chemotherapy before breast cancer surgery and even predict future cancer risk by examining normal breast tissue on cancer-free mammograms. A system that does this, called Clairity Breast, got FDA approval in June 2025. For now, women who want an AI mammogram reading will likely have to pay an extra $40 to $100.

"The closest thing we have to curing breast cancer at this point is early detection," McKeon says. "I'm all for doing whatever we can."

FUTURE ADVANCES IN CANCER DIAGNOSIS

▸IDENTIFY SKIN CANCERS. A handheld, AI-enabled device the size of a cellphone helped primary-care doctors identify potential skin cancers in the office more accurately than a visual inspection, in a 2025 University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill study. The FDA-cleared device, developed by DermaSensor of Miami, emits bursts of light over suspicious skin areas and analyzes the reflections.

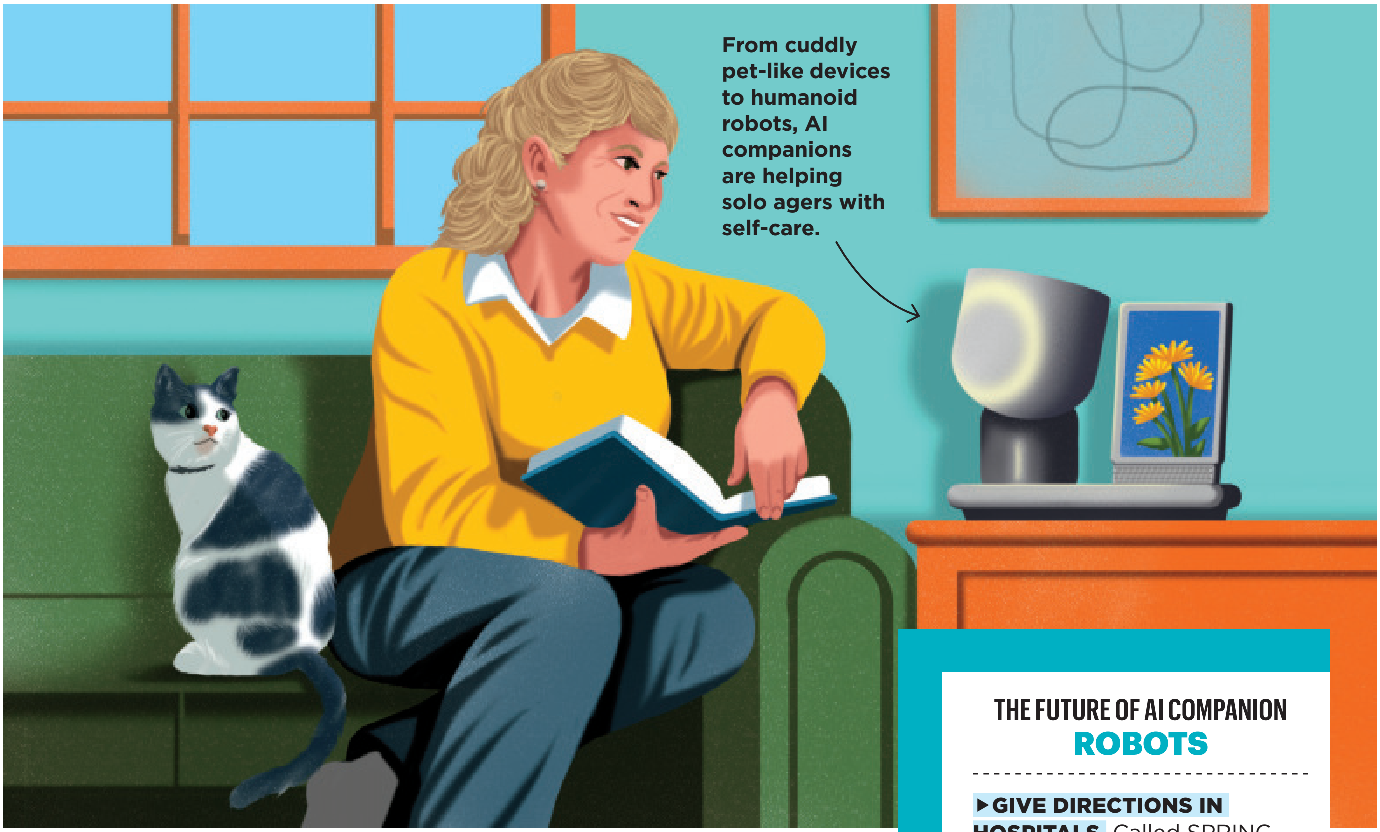


▸FIND PROSTATE CANCERS. An AI-assisted review added to a doctor's reading of magnetic resonance imaging improved detection of clinically significant prostate cancer in a recent study of 360 men (median age: 65) from the international Prostate Imaging-Cancer AI Consortium. The extra reading increased detection by 3.3 percent. The algorithm is still in research.

▸DETECT LUNG CANCERS. Using clues from primary-care doctors' notes, an experimental AI algorithm found potential lung cancers an average of four months sooner than doctors may have on their own in a study from the Netherlands, published in March 2025, of 525,526 people, including 2,386 with lung cancer.

Courtesy Jasper Twilt

PHOTOGRAPH BY ADAM AMENGUAL



From cuddly pet-like devices to humanoid robots, AI companions are helping solo agers with self-care.

BREAKTHROUGH *Interactions Ease Loneliness*

Companion Robots Can Reduce Isolation, Bolster Health

DENA DIVELBISS exercises more often, stays hydrated, remembers to take her 10 medications and has even met new people since February 2025, when she installed an AI-powered companion robot beside her favorite chair.

Divelbiss' new pal is called ElliQ. About the size of a small table lamp, the robot has no face, but it swivels, nods, lights up and chats with humanlike body language and poise. "We'll start the day, she asks me how I slept. At the end of the day, she asks how my day was," says Divelbiss, 63, a retired administrative assistant in western Maryland. "She remembers things, like that my cat's name is Una."

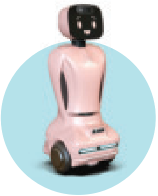
"For machines and AI to solve one of humanity's biggest problems—loneliness and isolation for older adults—they need to provide not just utility but real companionship," says Dor Skuler, cofounder and CEO of ElliQ developer Intuition Robotics, based in Israel. "They need to get a person's sense of humor and share their passions."

You can lease the little white robot, which requires a $60 monthly subscription (plus a onetime $250 enrollment fee). But agencies across the U.S. that deal with aging—including in New York, Florida, Michigan, Wisconsin and Washington state—are providing them free to older adults as part of a pilot project. Divelbiss got hers through the Maryland Commission on Aging. A widow coping with health conditions

THE FUTURE OF AI COMPANION ROBOTS

▸**GIVE DIRECTIONS IN HOSPITALS.** Called SPRING—Socially Pertinent Robots in Gerontological Healthcare—AI robots were deployed in a French hospital, where researchers announced in 2024 that they performed well in greeting visitors and guiding them to appointments.

▸**ANSWER DRUG QUESTIONS.** Pharmacists in Finland tested an AI-enabled robot called Furhat designed to answer questions about medications for a small 2024 study. Furhat could help customers who feel shy or embarrassed about drug concerns while also freeing up busy pharmacy staff.



Courtesy Patty Zamora/NaviGait Inc.

▸**CARE FOR PEOPLE WITH COGNITIVE DECLINE.** A 3-foot-tall, AI-enabled robot called Ruyi, deployed at a retirement community in Cleveland, is expected to help residents with tasks like setting the thermostat, connecting to the internet and updating caregivers.

including chronic pain and early-onset Alzheimer's disease, she uses ElliQ to play audiobooks, track pain levels, follow along to chair-exercise routines and take virtual tours around the world.

ElliQ was programmed to emulate and move in response to human speech. The robot holds freewheeling conversations and creates on-screen art and poetry using generative AI. "We have built-in guardrails so ElliQ doesn't say anything inappropriate," Skuler says.

Users can decide on health goals—like getting more physical activity or taking meds more regularly—and can name people they'd like the robot to contact about their progress. When one user repeatedly told ElliQ she wasn't feeling well, the robot asked her permission to tell her contact person; the user went to the ER and was treated for a urinary tract infection that had become sepsis, Skuler says. "ElliQ can save lives," he says, "but the robot doesn't do anything without a user's permission."

Most older adults remain skeptical that a robot can provide companionship, according to a 2023 study. But actual users are more enthusiastic: An eight-week study of 70 older Americans by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Media Lab found that companion robots created a significant increase in personal growth, self-acceptance and overall well-being.

From cute, furry cats and dogs to robots capable of interpreting and making humanlike facial expressions, AI-enabled companions can help older adults do more of the things that bring them joy, says robotics researcher Selma Sabanovic, professor at the Indiana University Luddy School of Informatics, Computing, and Engineering in Bloomington. She and a team are designing a robot programmed with AI to encourage older adults to talk about what activities matter most to them, then make plans to pursue them. "It doesn't tell you what is meaningful; it prompts you to have this conversation and realize what's meaningful for you," she says.

BREAKTHROUGH *Smarter Heart Health Tests*

Cardiac Scans Boost Heart Diagnostics

DAMINI DEY loves biking the roller-coaster mountain trails around Los Angeles. But in the spring of 2024, she had chest pains and shortness of breath on steep climbs. "It was a little worrisome," says Dey, an AI-based software developer.

Her cardiologist recommended cardiac computed tomography angiography (CCTA)—a scan that uses X-rays to look inside the heart for plaque and narrowed arteries. The scan found calcified plaque in blood vessels in her heart, a common indicator of emerging atherosclerosis.

But when Dey, director of the quantitative image analysis program at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, rechecked her imaging using AI-enabled software developed in her lab, she found deposits of heart-threatening noncalcified plaque.

This dangerous gunk gets overlooked by most conventional readings of CCTA scans because it lacks a bright, easy-to-see shell of calcium, says Daniel Berman, M.D., director of cardiac imaging at Cedars-Sinai. That's a problem, because noncalcified plaque often contains inflamed fat, which is prone to rupturing and triggering blood clots that can cause a heart attack, he says.

The results of the AI scan led Dey's cardiologist to prescribe a cholesterol-lowering statin. "With the plaque analysis enabled by AI, we were better able to treat her disease," says Cedars-Sinai

After an AI assist, Dey is back to conquering the mountains of LA.

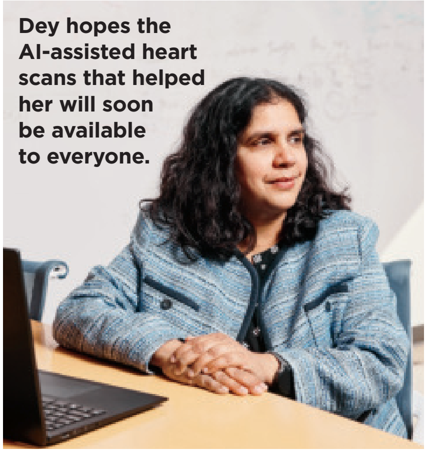
Courtesy Damini Dey

cardiologist Ronit Zadikany, M.D. The data also motivated Dey to eat healthier, she says, and get back on her mountain bike. “My LDL cholesterol is lower now, so I know what I’m doing is working.”

AI can turbocharge the effectiveness of heart-imaging tests, including CCTA, magnetic resonance imaging and ultrasound—the frontline scans that guide doctors in taking care of major heart problems. In studies from 2020 and 2024 by Dey and others, the AI software measured hazardous, hard-to-spot plaque in more than 1,600 patients—and found that those who had the most were three to five times more likely to have a heart attack than those with the least.

“The medical therapies we have are incredibly strong now,” Berman says. “We could dramatically reduce the heart attack rate if we knew which patients were at very high risk and got them under optimal therapy.”

The FDA has approved more than 180 AI-related advances that improve heart imaging results. And while the AI-enabled, scan-analyzing software developed by Dey, Berman and others isn’t available commercially yet, Dey says it may be soon. “We are working to get it into the hands of doctors,” she says. Last year, the American Medical Association and Medicare announced changes that would make it easier for doctors to bill insurance for performing the AI measurements of CCTA, Berman explains.



Dey hopes the AI-assisted heart scans that helped her will soon be available to everyone.

ADVANCES FOR DIABETES, HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE, INFLAMMATION

▸PERSONALIZE TYPE 2 DIABETES CARE. Stanford Medicine scientists have developed an AI-based algorithm that uses readings from a continuous blood glucose monitor to identify a user’s high blood sugar “subtype”—insulin resistance, lack of insulin production or low levels of gut hormones called incretins. Patients can then take preventive dietary or exercise measures before their condition progresses to type 2 diabetes or triggers complications.

▸SPOT PULMONARY HYPERTENSION. A digital stethoscope from Eko Health with experimental, AI-trained software listens to heart sounds to identify pulmonary hypertension—high blood pressure in the lungs that can overwork the heart. Previously, this condition could be diagnosed only with an echocardiogram or invasive cardiac catheterization. Pulmonary hypertension affects about 1 in 20 adults age 65 and older but is often overlooked.

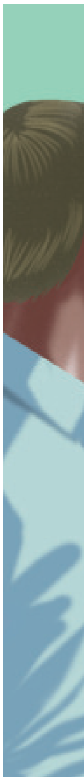
Courtesy Eko Health, Inc

▸FIND HIDDEN HEART INFLAMMATION. An experimental AI program developed by the U.K.’s Caristo Diagnostics measures inflammation in fat surrounding arteries in the heart and computes heart attack risk. If approved for use in the U.S., the test could help doctors identify people who would benefit from using colchicine, which was FDA-approved in 2023 for reducing inflammation and the risk of heart attack.

BREAKTHROUGH

Better Parkinson’s Management

AI Device Eases Symptoms

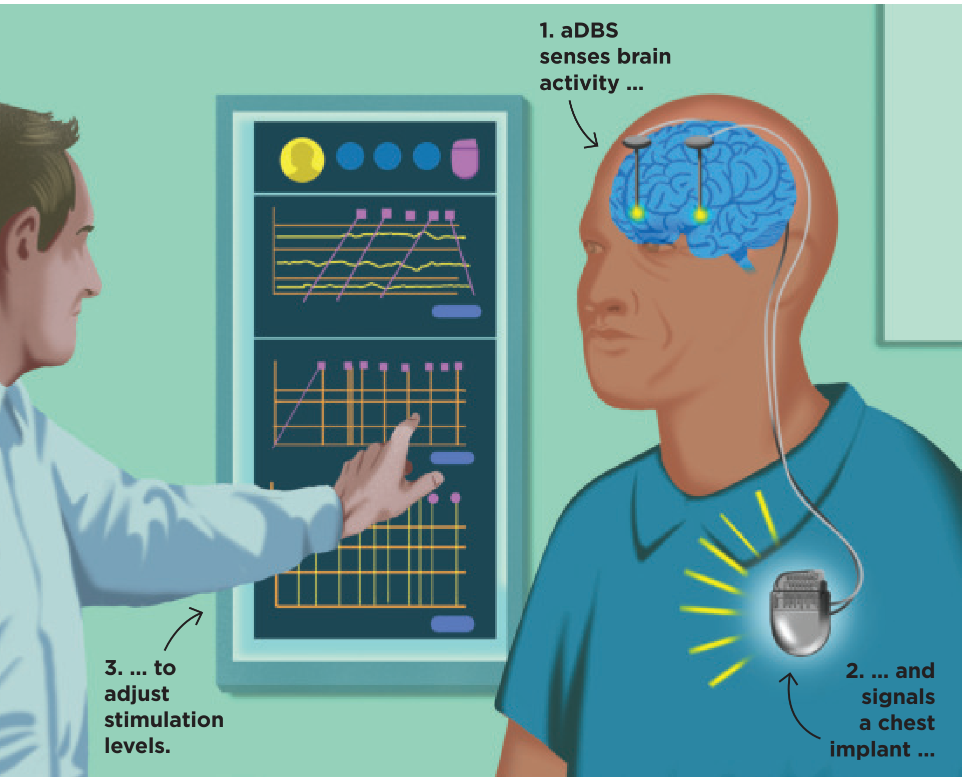


FOR DEB ZEYEN, Parkinson’s disease began as an unstoppable tremor in one finger. She was in her early 60s, newly retired from her job as a marketing vice president for CBS Television in New York City and diving into new work protecting the environment on Mexico’s Baja California peninsula.

Over the next six years, her symptoms became increasingly severe. “My speech slowed down, and my facial expression became blank. I felt endless fatigue,” Zeyen says. She took a combination of levodopa and carbidopa to replenish dopamine, the brain chemical that diminishes in Parkinson’s. But she was plagued by the drug’s notorious side effect: uncontrollable jerking movements. “I love snorkeling and scuba diving but had to stop—I was swimming in circles,” says Zeyen, 78, who now lives in Berkeley, California. In 2021, she joined a study of an artificial intelligence–driven, nondrug treatment called adaptive deep brain stimulation.

First implemented about 30 years ago, deep brain stimulation (DBS) helps regulate Parkinson’s symptoms by sending electrical pulses from a control unit implanted in the chest to electrodes in deep brain areas affected by the disease. But conventional DBS is capable of sending only one constant signal, which may be too weak at times to control severe symptoms and too strong at other times. “Parkinson’s symptoms fluctuate over the day due to things like stress, fatigue and medications wearing off,” says Simon Little, associate professor of neurology

PHOTOGRAPH BY ADAM AMENGUAL


1. aDBS senses brain activity ...
2. ... and signals a chest implant ...
3. ... to adjust stimulation levels.

at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF).

Adaptive DBS (aDBS), which Zeyen now uses, is designed to get around that problem. It's an AI-enabled advancement that senses the user's brain activity levels and dials brain stimulation up or down as needed. The first aDBS system, Percept from Medtronic, was approved by the FDA in February 2025.

Zeyen's aDBS system was implanted in 2021 as part of a UCSF research trial. At first, it was set to conventional, continuous stimulation. "My tremor stopped immediately," she says. Four months later, researchers at UCSF switched on the system's adaptive software, after training the controller on Zeyen's brain-activity patterns. Electrodes could then sense Zeyen's rising and falling brain activity and adjust electrical stimulation to match it.

Once the AI-adapted DBS kicked in, Zeyen regained her ability to make facial expressions. Her speech is quicker and clearer, and she uses a lower dose of her Parkinson's medication, which means fewer side effects.

Her results are not unusual. In a multicenter study of 60 people with Parkinson's who used Medtronic's aDBS device for a year, participants reported having more time each day during which their symptoms were controlled—with minimal drug side effects and less "off" time when symptoms were worse; 89 percent said they preferred adaptive over conventional DBS. "Adaptive DBS is about delivering a balanced therapy and getting patients to feel less aware of their disease," says Scott Stanslaski, a senior distinguished engineer at Medtronic who started working on development of the aDBS system 17 years ago, along with colleagues there and doctors worldwide.

The software feature is available in new Percept devices and in models sold by Medtronic since 2020, he adds. Consumers can access it by meeting with their neurologist. But it's not right for everyone, Little says. "We think the best candidates are people who are getting some benefit from conventional DBS but are still getting fluctuations in their clinical state throughout the day."

FUTURE ADVANCES FOR BRAIN HEALTH

▸DETECT PARKINSON'S FROM EARWAX ODORS. Chinese scientists have pinpointed cases of Parkinson's disease with up to 94.4 percent accuracy using an AI-trained olfactory device that senses changes in earwax compounds. In time, it could help people with this brain condition get referrals for diagnosis and treatment sooner.

▸IMPROVE MEMORY AFTER BRAIN INJURY. Traumatic brain injuries (TBI), frequently caused by falls and traffic accidents, affect an estimated 1 in 8 older adults and often lead to problems with thinking and memory loss. AI-trained deep brain stimulation improved memory in people with TBI by 19 percent, University of Pennsylvania scientists recently found.

▸SPOT STROKE EMERGENCIES WITH VOICE RECOGNITION. In a recent study, an AI-enabled voice-recognition program deployed at a Danish emergency call center identified strokes more accurately than human dispatchers did. The AI program was trained on thousands of voice recordings and transcribed calls to spot telltale warning signs.

In May 2025, Zeyen felt ready to snorkel again. She wore a life preserver, and a friend held her hand as she slipped into the Pacific Ocean in a calm Baja California cove. "I can't tell you the joy it brought, feeling the water, swimming, being free," she says. "I just loved sliding back into that place of wonder."

From top: Courtesy Hao Dong and Danhua Zhu; Courtesy Nia Therapeutics

BREAKTHROUGH *New Uses for Old Medications*

Repurposing Existing Drugs With AI

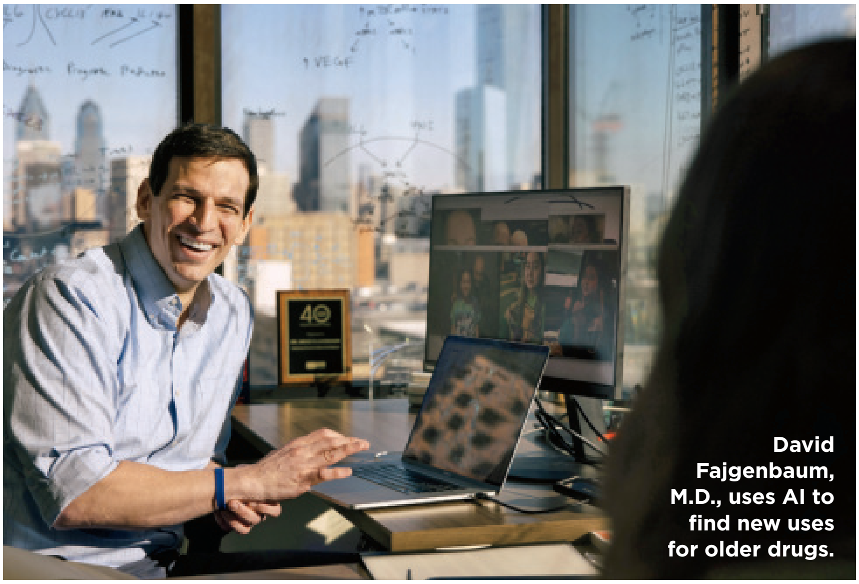
ALLEN JONES* had bought a cemetery plot and was ready to start hospice care, his body and mind ravaged by a rare immune condition that had resisted chemotherapy, a stem cell transplant and a slew of powerful drugs. A physician from Canada, Jones was in his late 40s, with a wife and young child. “We had all the end-of-life protocols ready,” he says.

Jones, now 51, has the most debilitating form of Castleman disease, which causes the immune system to churn out a torrent of inflammatory proteins that attack vital organs such as the liver and kidneys. Up to 25 percent of people with this condition die within five years. There is no cure for the form of the disease that struck Jones. But then his doctor heard about an unlikely treatment: An AI-enabled computer program being built in the U.K. had identified the arthritis drug adalimumab (Humira) as a potential treatment for Jones’ condition. “In a situation where you’re dying, you would do anything,” Jones says. He started weekly injections of the drug. “After a few weeks, it worked. The vast majority of my symptoms got better. I’m alive today because of it.”

The drug’s off-label use was discovered by Every Cure, a nonprofit organization that has developed an AI-driven mathematical formula to compare 18,500 diseases with more than 4,000 FDA-approved drugs. “We are on a mission to save lives with the drugs we already have,” says David Fajgenbaum, M.D., associate professor of translational medicine and human genetics at the University of Pennsylvania, who cofounded Every Cure in 2022. “We could potentially double the impact of our medicines in very short order by using them in new ways.”

As drug companies and researchers turn to AI to develop and even design brand-new drugs faster (some are even in human trials), Every Cure and a handful of similar projects in the U.S., Europe and Japan are using artificial intelligence to find existing drugs that can be repurposed to treat the world’s approximately 10,000 rare diseases—and more common conditions, too. “We literally look at every drug and every disease,” says Fajgenbaum. Every Cure’s platform has already flagged little-known possible repurposed treatments for autism spectrum disorder and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS, or Lou Gehrig’s disease).

Two years after Jones started adalimumab, his story was published as a case study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in February 2025. At press time, Jones was doing well. “I’m a testament to the potential of this approach. It’s a drug we never, ever would have considered. It was a last-ditch option. I think it’s amazing.”



David Fajgenbaum, M.D., uses AI to find new uses for older drugs.

ADVANCES IN DRUG DISCOVERY

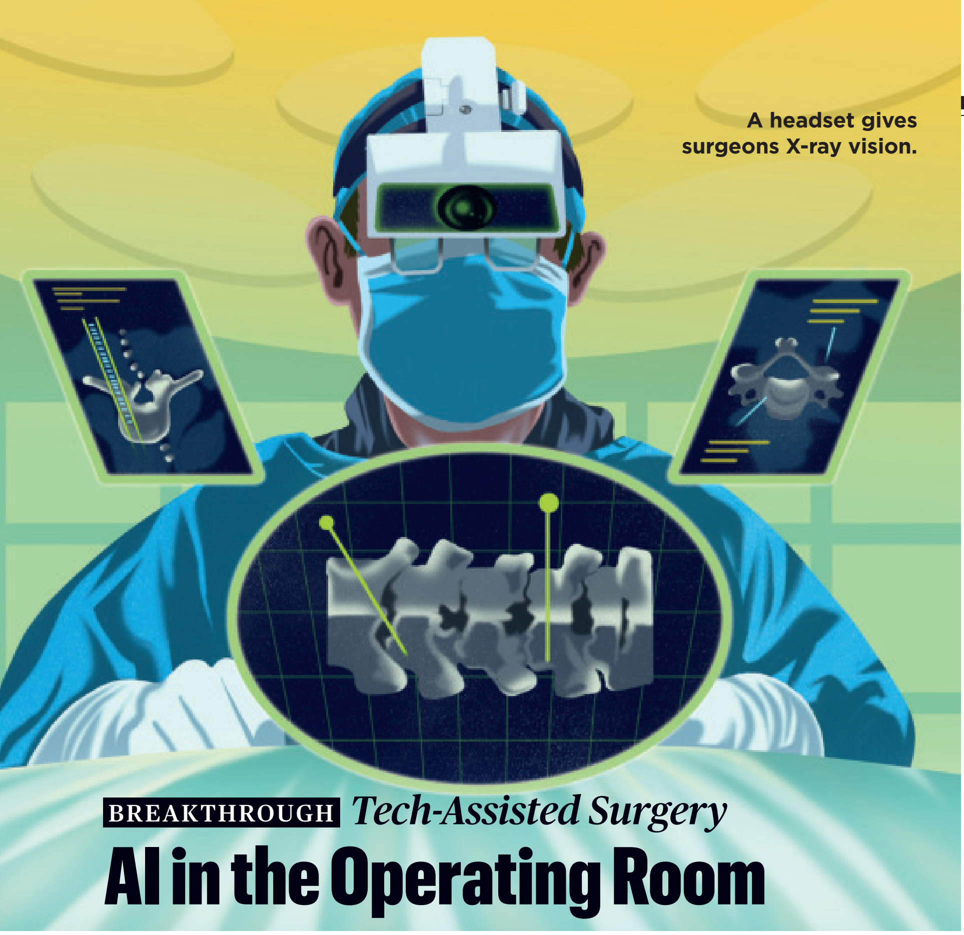
▸IDENTIFY NEW ANTIBIOTICS. Researchers at MIT reviewed 12 million compounds for a 2024 study on drug-resistant bacteria. Phare Bio, a nonprofit company, is now creating what it calls “the world’s first generative AI antibiotics discovery engine” to bring lifesaving drugs to market.

▸LINK ALZHEIMER’S GENES WITH TREATMENTS. At the Cleveland Clinic’s Alzheimer’s Network Medicine Laboratory, researchers used AI-enabled software to identify 156 different Alzheimer’s risk genes, each of which is now a potential new drug target. They’ve already identified several drugs as possible weapons against Alzheimer’s.

▸DEVELOP A NEW GUT DRUG. An experimental drug for inflammatory bowel disease, engineered using generative AI, has entered human trials. ABS-101, developed by Absci, will first be tested for safety; drugs for other disorders are in phase 2 clinical trials.

From left: Getty Images ; Alyssa Schukar/Redux

*Not his real name



A headset gives surgeons X-ray vision.

BREAKTHROUGH *Tech-Assisted Surgery*

AI in the Operating Room

MATT McLEOD'S lower back hurt. He lost feeling in his left leg. Then the longtime general manager of a Lansing, Michigan, menswear store noticed something really odd: His coats had gotten too long. "I was losing so much height," says McLeod, 65, of nearby Okemos. "I went from 5-foot-10 to 5-foot-7."

In December 2024, Frank Phillips, M.D., a professor of spine deformities at Rush Medical College in Chicago, repaired McLeod's discs, freed up squeezed nerves and straightened his curving backbone while wearing an AI-enabled headset that showed him detailed images of McLeod's spine—helping the surgeon perform the procedures through small incisions and attach screws to bones at precise angles. "I see a perfect 3D view of the spine," Phillips says. "It's like I'm looking at the spine for real."

The headset is part of the augmented reality Xvision Spine System from medical device maker Augmedics. The FDA cleared the latest model in March 2025, allowing "surgeons to see patients' anatomy as if they have X-ray vision," says the company. It also shows surgeons insertion points for screws, with guides for optimal angles.

The futuristic headset is one of a handful of AI-informed surgical tools quietly arriving in U.S. operating rooms; they include cameras, measuring tools and devices that track blood loss and oxygen levels during surgery. Often, consumers undergoing surgery don't even notice how these AI tools are being used, notes Phillips.

Advances like Xvision are the first wave; we could one day see AI-trained robots assisting surgeons with basic jobs like pulling back skin or suctioning a surgical site, says Axel Krieger, associate professor of mechanical engineering at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

In lab studies, Krieger and his team have taught AI-trained robots to suture together sections of a pig intestine. In a study published in July 2025, a robot that watched about 17 hours of gallbladder surgeries successfully performed part of a gallbladder procedure in a lab. The project "brings us significantly closer to clinically viable autonomous surgical systems that can work in the messy, unpredictable reality of actual patient care," Krieger said in a press release. In the future, he expects surgical robots will function as assistants. "It's like AI in cars," Krieger says. "We haven't gotten rid of steering wheels, but we have brake assist, lane assist, parking assistance. With robots, we'll see the same thing—they won't replace the experience and cognitive abilities of human surgeons." ■

Sari Harrar is a contributing editor to AARP The Magazine.

FUTURE
SURGERY ADVANCES

▸TRACK TOOLS DURING SURGERY. Tools or sponges get left behind in about 1 in 3,800 surgeries. Mayo Clinic doctors recently used AI to train a computer to recognize these objects. In a recent study, it was accurate 98.5 percent of the time and kept a correct surgical tool count when analyzing video of a real operation.

▸FIND HIDDEN CANCER DURING BRAIN SURGERY. An experimental tool called FastGlioma checks for residual cancer during brain surgery. In a 2024 study, the tool missed this dangerous, hidden cancer just 3.8 percent of the time, compared to a miss rate of 24 percent without it.

▸MATCH HEART DONORS TO RECIPIENTS. Over half of potential donor hearts in the U.S. go unused, sometimes because they aren't matched fast enough. Now a surgeon at the Medical University of South Carolina is using artificial intelligence to build a better allocation system.

Courtesy Chris Hedly/Michigan Medicine

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Whether you ride a cruiser, touring bike, or classic cycle, you love taking your motorcycle out for long back-road adventures. This time of year, the air is crisp – and the scenery couldn't be more colorful!

However, seasonal road hazards like falling leaves can make roads slippery. You also need to be wary of frost and ice at night, on elevated roadways, and at high elevations. With safe and defensive handling, you and your bike should be fine – and motorcycle insurance protects you even further.

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What are your favorite holiday experiences? Chances are, they include seasonal sounds, like festive music or banter across a table with your friends and family. Hearing loss can make you miss out on these joyful moments.

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ALL ABOARD!

Airplanes are cramped. Road trips are exhausting. For your next vacation, try taking a train instead

By Laura Kiniry

Amtrak's Empire Builder on the shores of Lake Five near Coram, Montana

All photo credits on page 83

I CAN PINPOINT the moment I fell in love with riding the rails. I was 24 years old and on the second evening of my first trip aboard Amtrak's California Zephyr, which runs between Chicago and the San Francisco Bay Area. Sitting next to me in the dining car was a college grad en route to see her aunt in Reno and, across the table, a couple of sisters heading home to Lake Tahoe. The four of us swapped stories and laughed while enjoying plates of trout and chicken breast and peering out the window at Utah's sandstone buttes, their muted colors transforming into shades of deep reds and oranges as the sun slipped below the horizon. *This,* I found myself thinking, *is exactly where I want to be.*

The author, *left*, with traveling companion Adam Hodge in India

Now I'm 51 and have spent decades working as a travel journalist, and I've come to realize that trains are the best way to move about on vacation. According to a recent AARP survey, one-third of Americans age 50-plus are also inclined to travel by train, primed to experience what I find so alluring. Trains are spacious and come equipped with cafés and, often, dining cars that provide opportunities to meet other passengers or simply take some personal space as needed.

And the places I have gone! I've experienced one of the world's steepest standard-gauge railway lines, Norway's Flåm Railway, which winds its way around sharp curves and through lush mountain scenery. I've been mesmerized aboard Amtrak's Empire Builder by the supreme grandeur of Montana's Glacier National Park. I've journeyed across Australia's Nullarbor Plain, a limestone plateau that includes the longest stretch of straight railway in the world: about 300 miles that highlight the country's vastness.

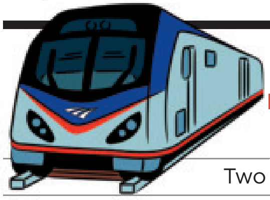
There's also a romance to train travel. As depicted in Alfred Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* and Wes Anderson's *The Darjeeling Limited*, it holds the glamour of an earlier era. Of course, the reality is not quite the movies. Delays can be frequent, and railcars are often loud. But there's one thing that stays true: Traveling by train is an adventure, providing a glimpse into worlds that may be invisible along highways and impossible to see at 30,000 feet. There's something magical about rollicking through the Nebraska prairies or catching the lights switching on at dusk in small-town Iowa.

The encounters along the way can also amaze. When I arrived for my overnight ride aboard Vietnam's Reunification Express in Ninh Binh, I was surprised to see a dozen local children practicing their English with Westerners—something they reportedly came to the station regularly to do. In India's Rajasthan state, I toasted a complimentary cup of steaming masala chai with the proprietor of a railway station kiosk. He then extended a casual invitation to his 1,500-guest wedding. Some of my most memorable train journeys included stops in places I might not have otherwise visited: Spokane, Washington, where I took in spectacular views of its magnificent urban waterfall, and Western Australia's Kalgoorlie, awash in gold rush history.

Back on board, I've marveled at Pennsylvania's autumn foliage through the window, slurped a bowl of pho with crew members near the Vietnamese seaside city of Da Nang, and chatted up new acquaintances about the beauty of Washington's Cascade Range in the observation car of Amtrak's Empire Builder. All this without having to stay alert behind the wheel or adhere to a fasten-seatbelt sign.

In a world that moves at breakneck speed, railways let us slow down. From the moment I settle into my sleeper cabin or coach seat, the pressures of home slip away. My biggest worry is deciding what I'll have for dinner. I don't expect to get anywhere fast, but that's much of the allure of train travel. It's the ability to unwind, unplug and let the rails carry me while I just sit back and savor the ride.

Laura Kiniry is a freelance journalist based in San Francisco and a train enthusiast. She has written for numerous outlets, including Condé Nast Traveler *and* Smithsonian. *Her most recent trip by rail was a journey from India's Ranthambore railway station to Agra.*



AMTRAK NORTHEAST REGIONAL COACH	TRAIN VS. PLANE	UNITED BOEING 737-800 VERSION 1
72 per car	NUMBER OF SEATS	48 Economy Plus; 102 Economy (coach cabin)
Two on each side of aisle	SEAT CONFIGURATION	Three on each side of aisle
23 in.	SEAT WIDTH	16.3 to 17.3 in. (coach)
39 in.	SEAT PITCH*	34 in. (Economy Plus); 30 in. (Economy)
Two, including one that is ADA compliant	NUMBER OF RESTROOMS	One in the front of the plane, two in the rear
Generally one conductor and at least one assistant conductor for entire train, plus a café car service attendant	NUMBER OF ATTENDANTS	Usually four
Yes	POWER OUTLETS	Yes in Economy Plus; no in Economy
Available on many trains and complimentary (although service can be spotty during travel)	WI-FI	$8 to $10 per flight →

**Distance from a point on one seat to the same point on the seat in front of it*

LET THE GOOD TIMES ROLL

A train is not just transportation—it's the vacation itself. Here are eight great rail adventures

Reporting by Larry Bleiberg, Bobbi Dempsey, Sheryl Jean, Veronica Stoddart and DeAnne Taylor

Rocky Mountaineer, between Denver, Colorado, and Moab, Utah

The one-night "Rockies to the Red Rocks" route travels through the Southwest from mid-April through mid-November. Passengers don't sleep on the train but, rather, in the hot springs resort town of Glenwood Springs, Colorado. You'll cross the Continental Divide and ride alongside the Colorado River, with snowcapped peaks and red rock canyons in view. *From $1,720.*

Amtrak Empire Builder, between Chicago and the Pacific Northwest

On one of Amtrak's most popular routes, the two-night, 46-hour Empire Builder provides a front-row seat to some of the most iconic scenery in the West. After the daily westbound train departs Chicago, you'll have scenic views of the Mississippi River and the North Dakota plains and follow parts of the Lewis and Clark Trail. A highlight is Montana's Glacier National Park. From Spokane, Washington, you can continue to Seattle or head down the Columbia River Gorge to Portland, with stunning views of Mount Hood. *From $220.*

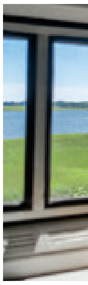
KING STREET STATION

Glacier Express, Switzerland

This candy-apple-red train connects the towns of Zermatt and St. Moritz, with about an eight-hour journey that cuts through a dramatic Alpine landscape. Break up the trip by stopping at resorts, such as the revitalized town of Andermatt. Booking a seat in the Excellence Class carriage gets you a champagne welcome and a five-course meal with wine. *From $260.*

VIA Rail's The Canadian, between Toronto and Vancouver

This four-night trip spans more than 2,500 miles across Canada, taking in the lakes of Ontario and the prairies of Manitoba, the snow-streaked Rocky Mountains and the picturesque forests of British Columbia. Enjoy stops in vibrant cities such as Winnipeg and Edmonton. *From $370.*



**Prices are approximate in U.S. dollars and subject to change.*

La Dolce Vita Orient Express, Italy
Launched in April, this luxury train offers one- to three-night itineraries with stops at some of Italy's most alluring destinations, including Venice and Rome. Along the way, take in picturesque villages and coastlines. A chef crafts gourmet on-board meals, paired with fine wines. *From around $3,500.*

Amtrak Downeaster, between Boston, Massachusetts, and Brunswick, Maine
Around 3½ hours in length, this route is a popular train to take for fall and winter getaways in New England, as colorful foliage and wintry snowscapes scroll past the large picture windows. *From $30.*

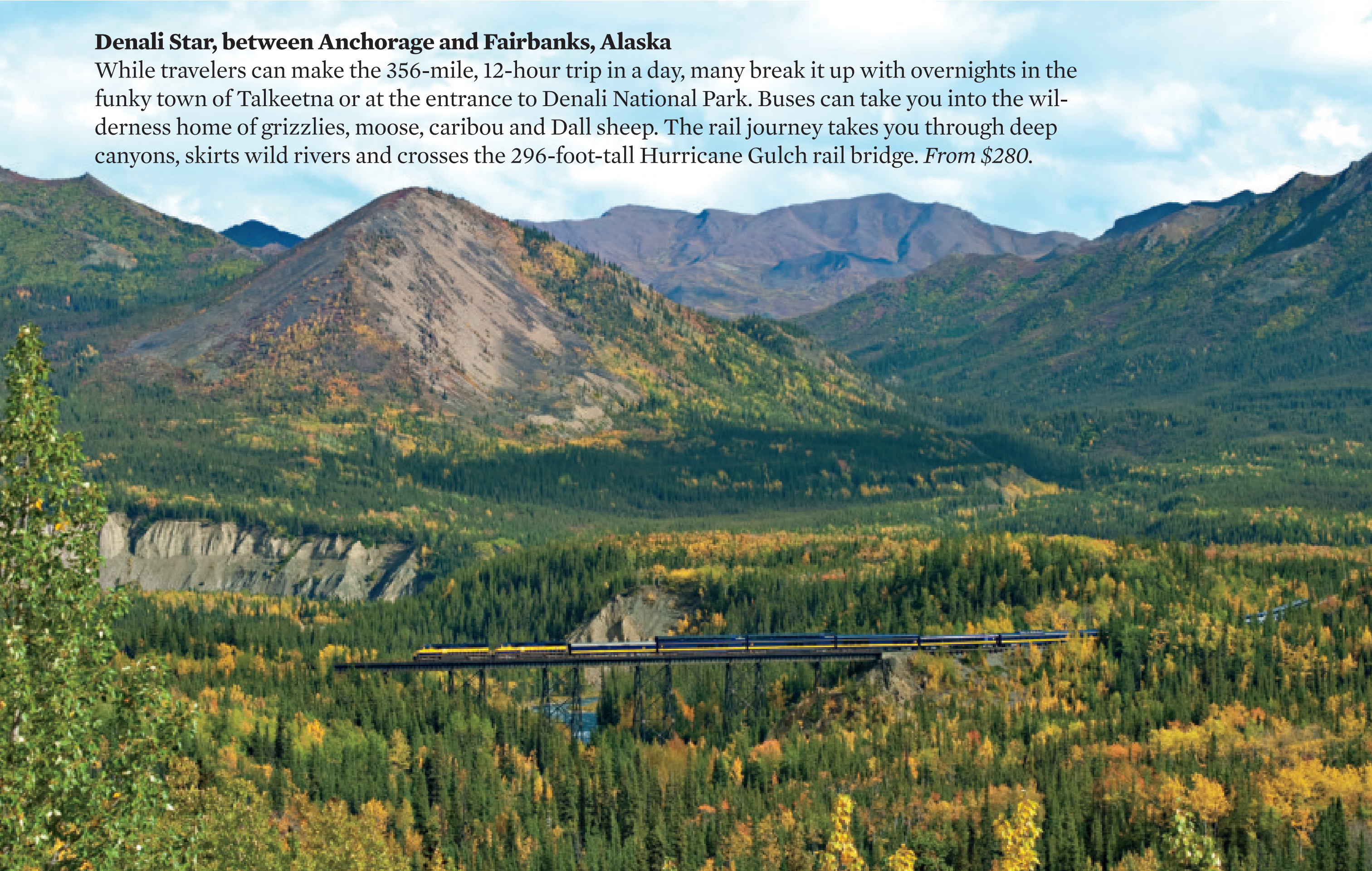
Great Journeys, New Zealand
The 18-day "Flavours of Aotearoa" itinerary travels from Auckland, on the North Island, to Queenstown, on the South Island. Watch for dolphins in Kaikōura, take part in wine tastings at vineyards in Marlborough, and enjoy the relaxing scent of lavender fields. Over the course of the trip, travelers will board three different trains and an interisland ferry and stay in four- to five-star hotels. *From $9,800.*

INSIDER TIP!

Jeremy Larsen, *51, T1D Wanderer videos on YouTube*

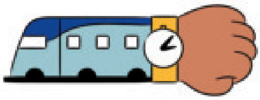
Mind your medication. On many trains, you can't use the refrigerators or microwaves; they are for crew only. So Larsen, who has type 1 diabetes, packs his much-needed insulin in FRIO cooling pouches, which keep it cold for about 45 hours.

Denali Star, between Anchorage and Fairbanks, Alaska
While travelers can make the 356-mile, 12-hour trip in a day, many break it up with overnights in the funky town of Talkeetna or at the entrance to Denali National Park. Buses can take you into the wilderness home of grizzlies, moose, caribou and Dall sheep. The rail journey takes you through deep canyons, skirts wild rivers and crosses the 296-foot-tall Hurricane Gulch rail bridge. *From $280.*



THE RAIL STORY

What to know about Amtrak train travel



AT THE STATION

When it comes to check-in and security lines, train stations are a breeze compared with airports. Plan to arrive between 30 and 60 minutes before departure, depending on whether you need help with luggage or have ticketing questions. Boarding gates aren't typically posted until about 15 minutes before a train's departure. Download Amtrak's app for up-to-date info like track notifications. After you board and the train is in motion, a conductor will scan your ticket.

INSIDER TIP!

***Tomiko Harvey**, 54, of luxury lifestyle website* Passportsand Grub.com

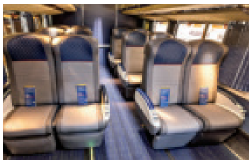
Get cozy. Bring along a large scarf that can double as a blanket. "I carry my Fendi wrap with me almost everywhere."

Be prepared. Wi-Fi is often spotty, so Harvey recommends downloading everything you need before you board, or using a mobile hot spot.

ON THE TRAIN

Passenger cars: These can be designated by class. Most common is coach class, but some trains also have business or first class. Quiet cars are also available on many of Amtrak's regional or short-route trains. No talking on cellphones allowed! The seating configuration generally has two seats on either side of an aisle.

Tip: Choose a seat on the side of the train opposite the sun to avoid glare while viewing or photographing the scenery.



Dining cars: These moving restaurants are typically available on long-distance trains. If you're traveling solo, you'll likely be seated at a table with other passengers, offering a great opportunity to swap stories while you eat and drink. If you prefer privacy, sleeping-car passengers can have meals delivered to their room. Shorter-route trains may have only a café car, with food and drinks available for purchase that you can take back to your seat.

Observation cars: Some trains have these special cars for passengers to visit. (Amtrak calls them "sightseer lounges.") Here, you often can sit in a lounge-style chair that looks out onto panoramic views, like Colorado's Rocky Mountains and Washington's Puget Sound estuary. These and the snack bars are also the train's social hubs, making it easy to play a game of cards or sip coffee with a new friend.

Sleeper cars: If you're traveling on an overnight route, consider booking a room so you can sleep in a bed rather than a seat. You can get a room with a full bathroom, including a small shower, or a roomette (you'll need to use the restroom and shower facilities down the hall). You'll also get the services of an attendant, who can assist with meals and help with luggage. Be aware: The beds are bunk-style, meaning if you're traveling with a companion, one of you will need to climb into the upper berth. Accessible bedrooms located on the bottom of Amtrak's two-level Superliner cars include space for a wheelchair. Keep in mind that in the sleeper car, you pay by room rather than by person, making it relatively expensive for a solo traveler.

WHAT TO PACK

Travelers generally can check up to four bags (two free and two at $20 each) and bring one personal and two carry-on items (size and weight limits apply, and oversize items may incur fees). Some stations offer Red Cap service to assist passengers with their bags.

WHAT TO BRING ON BOARD

Slippers Depending on the sleeping car you've booked, you might need to go down the hall to use the bathroom at night.

Chargers or batteries for electronic devices

A portable travel safe such as Pacsafe, Trova Go or Safego. Sleeping cars may lock only from the inside, so if you leave for a meal or go to the observation car, your door remains unlocked. Carry valuables with you when you leave your room or keep them in a locked safe.

A travel pillow, blanket and eye mask

Snacks and drinks You can bring your own food.

Headphones

Toiletries for overnight journeys.

Reporting by Bobbi Dempsey, Bill Fink, Laura Kiniry, Stephanie Vermillion

Explore the World
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There's a version of you that comes alive when you travel. The version who gets goosebumps at golden hour, who lingers in museums, who orders something new just because. Travel has a way of nurturing the curious, deeply present version of you. It reminds you that you're not just who you've always been. You're also the type who can get lost on purpose, strike up conversations with strangers, and fall in love with a place you just met.

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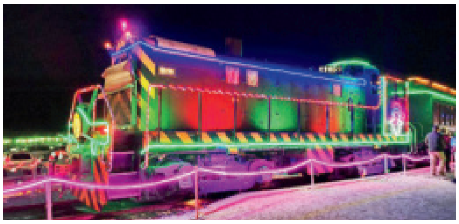
THE POLAR EXPRESS AND BEYOND: FOUR HOLIDAY EXCURSIONS

Take a seasonal train tour—with compartments decked out in festive lights. Many offer hot drinks and sweet treats, plus an opportunity to belt out Christmas carols and, if you have little ones in tow, a visit with Santa

The Polar Express Train Ride, California State Railroad Museum, Sacramento
With the success of author-illustrator Chris Van Allsburg's beloved picture book and the subsequent 2004 film, several rail lines across the U.S. have launched Polar Express rides. Among them is the ride offered by the California State Railroad Museum. Before the train departs Old Sacramento Waterfront, characters from *The Polar Express* entertain passengers. During the ride, guests get their golden ticket punched, listen to a reading of the book and receive a gift from Santa.
DATES: *November 14 to December 21* **COST:** *From $80.*

Holiday Express, 1880 Train, Hill City, South Dakota
This train runs one-hour round trips to the "North Pole." The vintage diesel-electric locomotive weaves through the forested Black Hills, with views of historic mining encampments and perhaps deer and woodchucks along the way. Sit in an adults-only car and enjoy hot chocolate spiked with schnapps.
DATES: *November 26 through December 24, running mostly on weekends*
COST: *Adults, from $46; children, $29.*



V&T Candy Cane Express, Virginia & Truckee Railroad, Virginia City, Nevada
Make the nearly one-hour trip to Gold Hill and back while sipping hot chocolate or spiced apple cider. You'll also hear Christmas stories and sing carols. You might even spot some wild horses along the way.
DATES: *Every weekend from Thanksgiving until the weekend before Christmas* **COST:** *Around $60 for two seats.*

North Pole Express, Owosso, Michigan
Wear your favorite pajamas or 1940s and '50s attire for the Steam Railroading Institute's nostalgic excursion. The institute's largest locomotive, the Pere Marquette 1225, was inspiration for the train in the *Polar Express* movie.
DATES: *Weekends and Fridays, from November 21 to December 21* **COST:** *From $85.*
—Robin L. Flanigan

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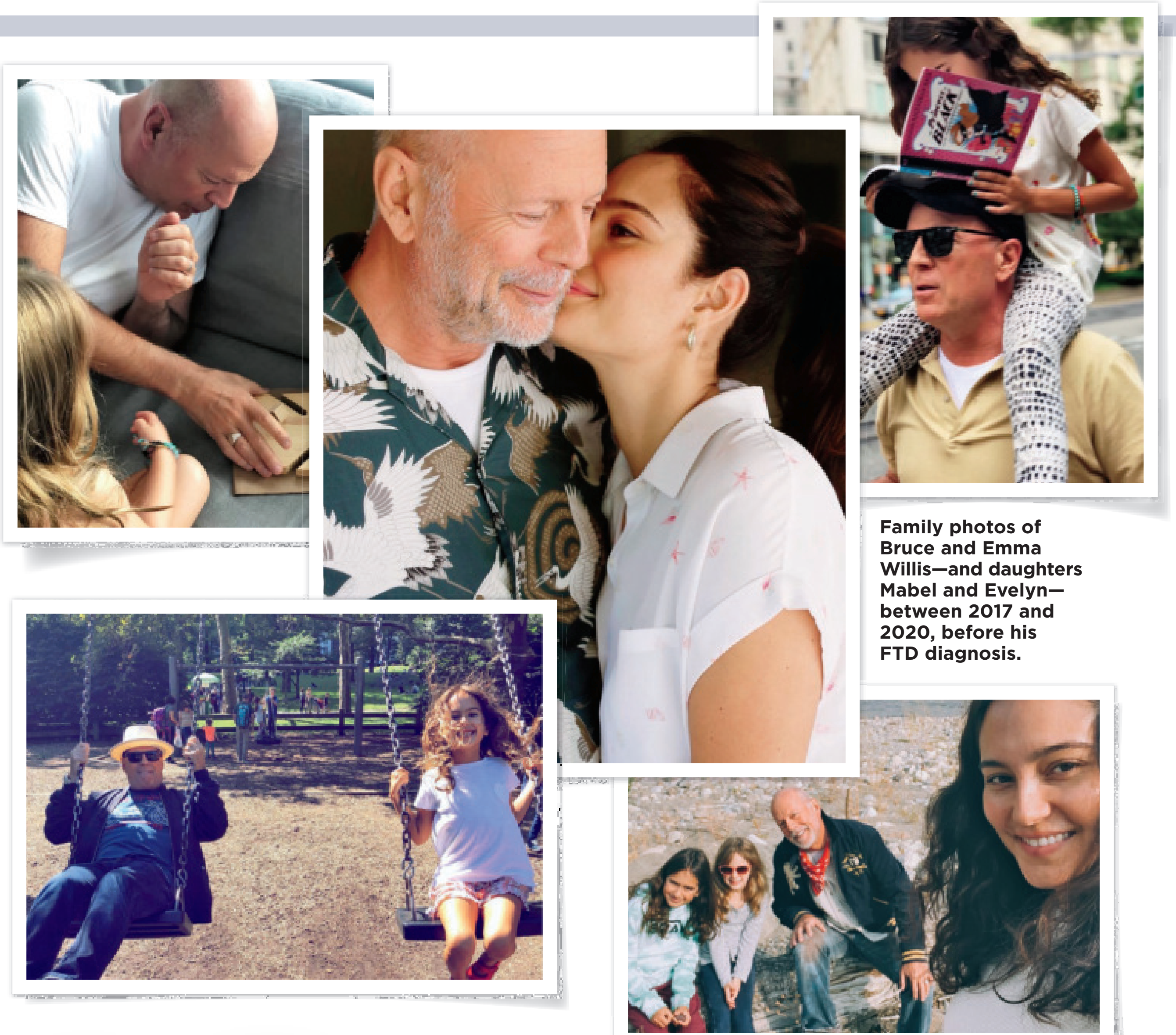


Family photos of Bruce and Emma Willis—and daughters Mabel and Evelyn—between 2017 and 2020, before his FTD diagnosis.

A Caregiving Journey

In her new book (and in an exclusive interview with us), Emma Heming Willis talks frankly about coping with the dementia of her husband, actor **Bruce Willis**

Courtesy Emma Heming Willis

A Conversation With

Emma Heming Willis

EMMA HEMING WILLIS, 47, was thrust into a caregiving role unexpectedly a couple of years ago when the behavior of her husband, actor Bruce Willis, 70, began to change, first almost imperceptibly, then dramatically—changes that were later attributed to frontotemporal dementia (FTD). Since then, she's had to navigate the challenging path from loving wife to Bruce's chief advocate and caregiver, supported by the whole Willis clan, including Bruce's three adult daughters with ex-wife Demi Moore—Rumer, 37; Scout, 34; and Tallulah, 31—and the two young daughters he shares with Heming Willis: Mabel, 13, and Evelyn, 11. Willis acknowledges that the experience is easier for her than it is for many: She can well afford caregiving assistance, for one. "I fully recognize the privilege of my position," she writes in her new book, *The Unexpected Journey* (excerpted on page 66). "But caregiving is caregiving—whether you have support or not, the emotional toll remains."

She spoke with us about the ways her family has adapted, how she handles her darker days and what she's learned during this difficult time that might help others new to caregiving.

What made you decide to share the details of your journey? I realized that there was such a lack of support out there. When we received our FTD diagnosis, we left that appointment without any clear direction. There was no information, just a "Check back in a few months," and that was it. That was a horrible and traumatic time. But since then, I've been able to assemble all of these experts and specialists around our family and all of this valuable information. I want [my book] to be a map for people navigating this unexpected road.

Why do you prefer the term "care partner" to "caregiver"? I learned this term from Teepa Snow, a dementia care specialist and an expert I included in my book. She was always calling me a care partner, and I loved that. "Caregiver" just seemed to sort of separate me from my husband.

What were the first signs that something might be wrong or different with Bruce? There are different variants of FTD that affect different things like behavior, movement or speech. Bruce was diagnosed with PPA, which is primary progressive aphasia and affects a person's ability to communicate. So for him, it started to show up through language. As a younger person, he had a severe stutter, and I started noticing that stutter coming back and other behavior changes. But never in my wildest dreams did I think that these were early signs of young-onset dementia.

Can you share how Bruce is doing now? It's such a loaded question. What I can say is that FTD is a really unkind form of dementia. They all are, right? There is no kind version of dementia. But FTD is the one that I know. There is no treatment; there is no cure. So he's doing the best he can do, given the circumstances of this terrible disease.

Your book includes some of the caregiving tips you've received from experts. What advice has helped you most? A neurologist said to me, "You're burning your candle at both ends, and you need to understand that sometimes due to the stress of caregiving, the caregiver dies before the person that they are caring for." That was a wake-up call. We have young kids, and I didn't want them to lose two parents. So I started to make a conscious effort to find time in my day to care for myself and understand that it's not selfish; it's self-preserving. And if we don't care for ourselves, then how can we properly tend to the person that we're caring for?

The extended Willis clan (including Bruce's ex-wife, actor Demi Moore) celebrate Emma's 42nd birthday.

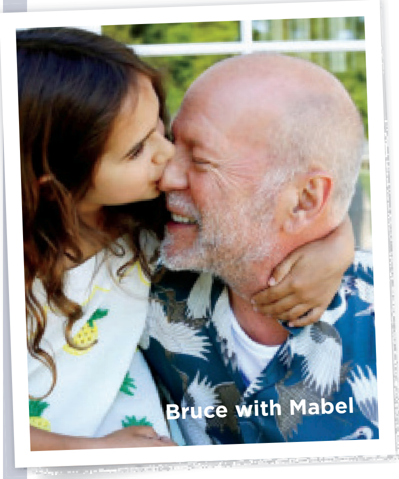
How have you found support? I thought I was the only one who could care for Bruce. I didn't want to be a burden to anyone. What I realized was that it was OK to ask for help. Sometimes it was helping take care of our young children. When Bruce was diagnosed, our two girls were 8 and 10. So I was able to rally friends, family or parents of my kids' friends to help with pickup or activities for them.

It's also important for caregivers to connect to their community. For me, there's the Association for Frontotemporal Degeneration, which has support groups where you can talk openly and no one will judge you. It's been helpful to normalize some of these feelings I thought were just happening to me. I didn't realize that other people felt guilt, shame, anger.... Being isolated is a killer.

What would you say to someone new to dementia caregiving, as you were a few years ago? You receive this diagnosis and feel like your whole world has rocked, but you will find your footing. Your world will look different. It will feel different. But you will be OK in time. I didn't know that was possible. I felt hopeless, but I feel a lot more hopeful and have a lot more gratitude than I ever did.

> "Just send him a prayer. Bring him that healing love."

What is the best way for friends and family members to offer support to caregivers? I always suggest that when someone says, "Let me know if there's anything I can do," instead of just saying, "No, it's fine, I've got this," be proactive and make a list of things that you do throughout the day. Then you could say to the person, "Here is something that would be helpful," whether it's starting a meal train, going to the grocery store, picking up prescriptions or coming to sit with your person for a couple of hours while the care partner tends to their needs. That was a game changer for me—understanding that it was OK to ask for help.

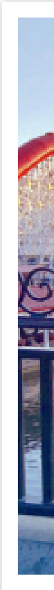

Bruce with Mabel

Why did you decide to move Bruce to his own house near your family's home? I am afraid of being judged about that, but you have to do what's right for your family. I want to go back to my old life with my husband and my kids, but, unfortunately, that's not in the cards for us. So we have had to pivot and make really hard decisions. Those decisions were first driven by thinking, *What would Bruce want me to do*? And I know that he would want our children to be in a home that was about their needs, not about his needs—so they're able to have playdates and sleepovers and be in a place that's fun and loud and full of energy. The setup we have now works beautifully. It was a hard decision but the right one for our family.

You write about feeling "ambiguous loss." Can you explain that? For me, it's like you're grieving for someone who is still alive, which just feels odd. As you're walking through dementia with someone, slowly things start to be taken away from them. That's what FTD does. It just takes, and it takes, and when you think it can't take anymore, it takes again. So you're constantly in this state of grief.... But as hard as ambiguous loss is, I am so grateful that we still have him. We have the gift of time with him, and I'll take it, no matter what.

How are your daughters doing? They are doing really well, all things considered. I love how they just meet Bruce where he's at. There's something really beautiful to see how they have adapted to his world.

What brings you joy during this difficult time? I find joy in nature. I love being outdoors. I love being in my garden: planting something, tending to it, watering it, seeing it grow. That makes me really happy. I love being with our daughters—they're so fun—and I find joy with my husband. It's not all sadness. That's always there, but I also make room for the cracks of light that come in.



Which Dementia Is Which?

A guide to the 5 most common dementias

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

The most common form, affecting some 7.2 million Americans. It typically begins with memory loss in the mid-60s or later and is linked to abnormal protein buildups that disrupt brain cell communication.

LEWY BODY DEMENTIA

Includes dementia with Lewy bodies (DLB) and Parkinson's disease dementia (PDD). Both involve abnormal deposits of alpha-synuclein (Lewy bodies) in the brain, affecting movement, thinking, mood and behavior.

VASCULAR DEMENTIA

Accounts for 5 to 10 percent of dementia cases, and results from strokes or impaired blood flow to the brain. Risk factors include high blood pressure, heart issues, diabetes and high cholesterol. Symptoms vary.

FRONTOTEMPORAL DEMENTIA (FTD)

Usually affects adults ages 45 to 64. One type affects the brain's frontal lobes, resulting in changes in social conduct; the other—which Bruce Willis has—affects temporal lobes, and impairs understanding and use of language.

MIXED DEMENTIA

Involves symptoms from more than one dementia type, such as Alzheimer's combined with vascular dementia. While it's unclear how many older adults have mixed dementia, it may be more common than realized.

At Disneyland in 2019

I needed to be able to find that balance because I didn't want our daughters' world to be clouded by FTD. It didn't happen overnight. In those early years, I was too much on the dark side, and I made a conscious effort to open our world up for the sake of our daughters, for the sake of myself and for the sake of Bruce.

For exclusive video of Emma Willis, visit aarp.org/emmawillis or scan this code with your phone.

Is there anything in particular that you want Bruce's fans to know? I did a social media post for his 70th birthday in March, and I said, "Just send him a prayer. Bring him all the light and all that healing love." And I know this sounds super woo-woo, but I know that the energy his fans bring to him lifts things up. I'm so grateful for them. I'm so grateful for their love and their kindness and their compassion. It has been really meaningful and really beautiful.

In the final analysis, what do you hope to achieve with your advocacy, and with your new book? I'm trying to raise as much awareness as possible about FTD. I don't feel comfortable with public speaking, but I need to get out of my shyness and raise my voice so we can get people to a diagnosis earlier. What I love about the book is that you can open it up, read a paragraph and take something away from it. And I've been encouraging neurologists to understand that they need to support the caregiver, even to give them one sheet of paper with just a couple of contacts and some information. Or I hope this book will be in their office and they can say, "We are so sorry that you've received this diagnosis. But here is something that will help you." That's my whole reason for writing it. *—Interview by Christina Ianzito*

By the Numbers

Caregiving in America Today

BRUCE AND EMMA WILLIS' caregiving journey is just one of many that begin each year. A new report, Caregiving in the U.S. 2025—by AARP and the National Alliance for Caregiving—provides a comprehensive look at the state of caregiving in America. Here, we break it down by the numbers:

63 million American adults provide care to adults or children with a medical condition or disability.

51 The **AVERAGE AGE** of a caregiver

61% of caregivers are **women**.

40% of caregivers **live with** their care recipient.

The most common main condition requiring care is "old age" or aging (13%), followed by Alzheimer's or other dementias (11%).

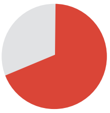
29% are sandwich-generation caregivers—caring for **children or grandchildren** under 18 living at home while also caring for an **adult family member or friend**.

NEARLY 30% of caregivers have provided care for **5 years or more**.

24% OF CAREGIVERS provide **40 or more hours of care each week**, equivalent to a full-time job.

55% of caregivers take on **medical or nursing tasks** like administering injections and managing catheters.

38% of caregivers report that they have experienced high emotional stress.



70% of working-age caregivers are **employed** while also providing care.

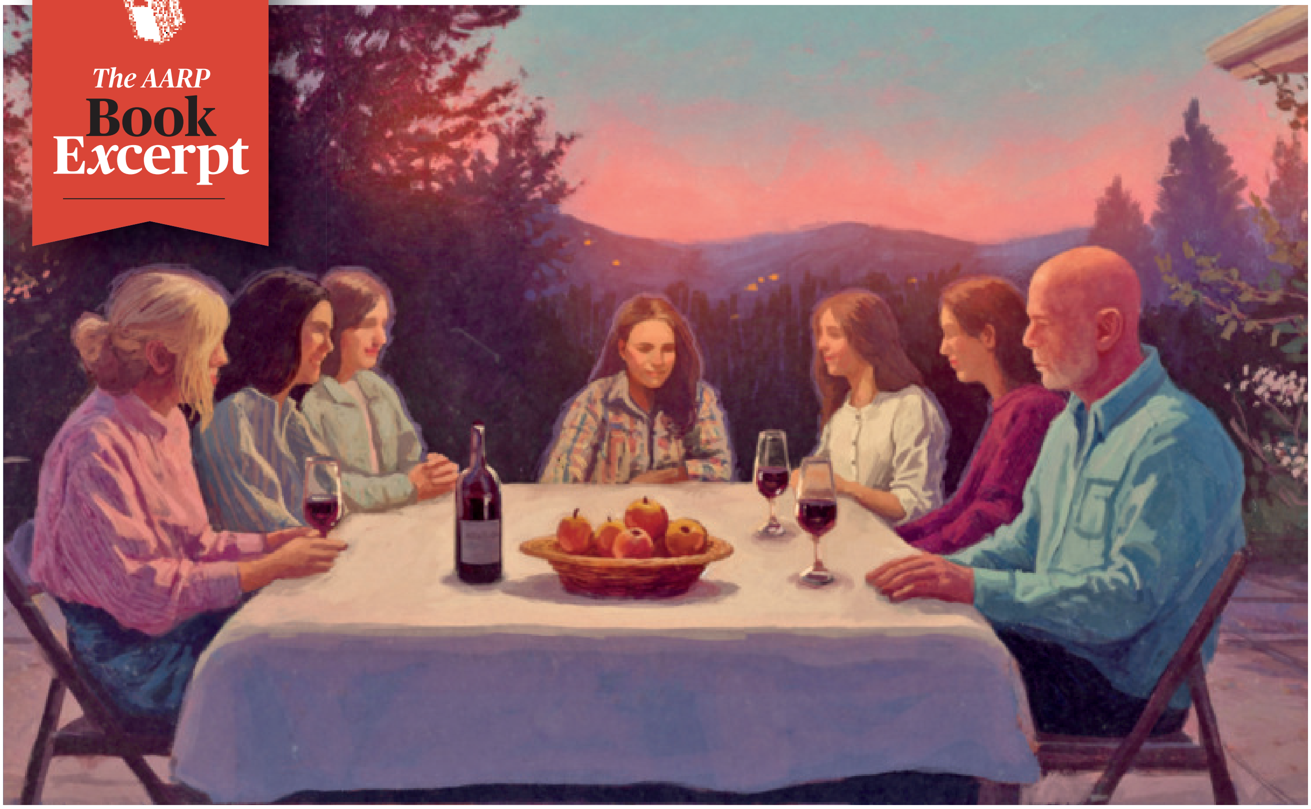
23% find it difficult to care for their **own health**, and ...

20% of caregivers rate their **health as fair or poor**.

Go to aarp.org/caregiving for the complete report and much more from AARP on caregiving, including personal care, medical management and financial guidance.

Turn to read the excerpt

The AARP Book Excerpt



‘That Wasn’t the Bruce I Knew’

The husband I adored remained oddly quiet. I decided it was time to talk to a doctor (adapted from my new book, *The Unexpected Journey*)

By Emma Heming Willis

WHEN I SUSPECTED something was “off” with Bruce but couldn’t put my finger on what it was, I went through every possible explanation in my head. Was there a problem in our marriage? Was it Bruce’s sleeping difficulties?

Maybe it was his hearing loss. In the ’90s when he was filming *Die Hard*, there was a scene where he had to fire a gun underneath a table. When it was shot, oddly, Bruce wasn’t wearing any protective earplugs or covering, and he lost a large percentage of his hearing in one ear. When we first got together, this never posed a real problem.

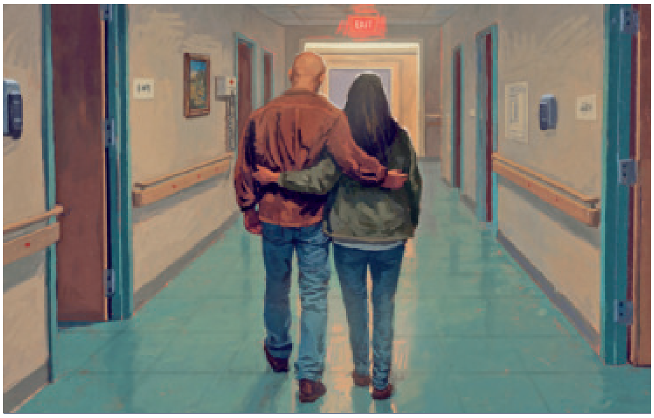
Years later, however, I began to notice him sort of check out if we were at a dinner party or meal with the entire family. He would sit back and let everyone else do the talking without contributing much. Mind you, when we would get the family together, Bruce was usually the only man at a table full of women with me, our two girls, and his three older daughters speaking a mile a minute and over each other with excitement. Initially, I thought he was just letting us have our girl time to “yak it up,” as he would say, rather than try to get a word in.

But, in hindsight, that wasn’t the Bruce I knew. Especially when it came to connecting with his daughters. Bruce was a family man at heart. Early on in our relationship and before we had children together, he wanted to spend as much time with his older girls as possible. If we were traveling, he was always dying to get back to them, calling the feeling a “gravitational pull,” which always brought him back to his girls. This was something I loved about him. Today, I understand that him checking out at the table was likely due to cognitive overload—difficulty processing conversations, which is common in primary progressive aphasia (PPA),

ILLUSTRATIONS BY LELAND FOSTER

the variant of frontotemporal dementia (FTD) Bruce has. It was an early symptom of his disease.

MANY FAMILIES spend years living with a lot of confusion around symptoms prior to a diagnosis. From speaking to other care partners, I have learned how subtle (or not so subtle) symptoms of certain forms of dementia like FTD or Lewy body, for example, can rock a whole family system and destroy it. For FTD in particular, in those early years, no one suspects the diagnosis because most people have no clue what FTD is. They assume their person is being rude, apathetic, withdrawn, depressed, irritable, impulsive, reckless, or lacking empathy—an array of behaviors that seem like personal choices rather than symptoms of a disease. This shift in behavior, language, and/or personality is frustrating and can ruin relationships. FTD is not your doctor's first or second thought either. Often FTD is misdiagnosed as a midlife crisis, depression, or bipolar disorder, to name just a few, because the symptoms can apply to those conditions.



> **"I felt some relief in finding out that Bruce had aphasia and then later finding out he had FTD."**

Bruce Miller, M.D., the leading expert in FTD, a professor of neurology at the University of California, San Francisco, and head of the Global Brain Health Institute, explains: "Many of the symptoms are elusive, and different for each neurodegenerative disease. It's tricky to determine that a change in language or personality is FTD or another form of dementia. Most of us think about the brain as important for memory and language. But the brain is also responsible for our social interactions—how we relate to others and how we nurture and empathize with them."

Most of us don't know this or anything else about FTD, and all you see and experience is that something is incredibly different with your loved one. Also, if you're like I was, you may feel strange bringing these things to the attention of your partner's doctor—especially if that doctor is not your doctor, too.

Initially, I was uneasy going over Bruce's head in that way. Something about the morality of it didn't sit well with me. If you feel that way, too, consider the advice of Yolande Pijnenburg, a professor of young-onset dementia at Alzheimer Center Amsterdam in the Netherlands: "If your feeling gets stronger that this change in behavior is something that person can't help, you have to trust that feeling because you're actually acting to benefit your partner."

Subtle changes due to dementia can go on for years, and all that time your person looks fine on the outside. Even more bewildering is that there might never be a moment when he or she expresses concern that something is wrong to you or to a doctor. There's actually a medical term for this: anosognosia. So, if your person isn't raising his or her hand for help, it's easy to think that maybe everything is OK. This makes those early stages confusing, and it's FTD and other early-onset dementias doctors can easily overlook again and again.

"It can take at least two to three years to get a diagnosis, and in that time, many people are misdiagnosed," explains Miller. This delay can be a catastrophe, as families can be completely derailed and dismantled—emotionally and financially—by the personality changes and shifts in their loved ones from their brains quietly dying.

Over time, I began to suspect that the issue wasn't Bruce's hearing or a rocky patch in our marriage, and that instinct made me realize we should go to the doctor. I can't stress enough the importance of trusting your gut when you know something is wrong. Even if test results come back "normal" or a doctor dismisses your concerns, don't stop pushing for answers.

If your doctor isn't listening, find one who will. You know your person best. Keep advocating for them and yourself.

I felt some relief in finding out that Bruce had aphasia and then later finding out he had FTD. With those diagnoses, I finally understood that those crazy marital issues were not Bruce. Neither were those off moments and subtle shifts in his personality. They were the result of his brain being dismantled and taking part of the husband I knew and loved with it.

You weren't doing any of this on purpose, I thought as I looked over at him. *You were there the whole time.* ■

Emma Heming Willis, a British model and actor, is married to and the caregiver of actor Bruce Willis.

Adapted from The Unexpected Journey: Finding Strength, Hope, and Yourself on the Caregiving Path *by Emma Heming Willis, published by The Open Field, an imprint of Penguin Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Random House, LLC. Copyright © 2025 by Emma Heming Willis.*

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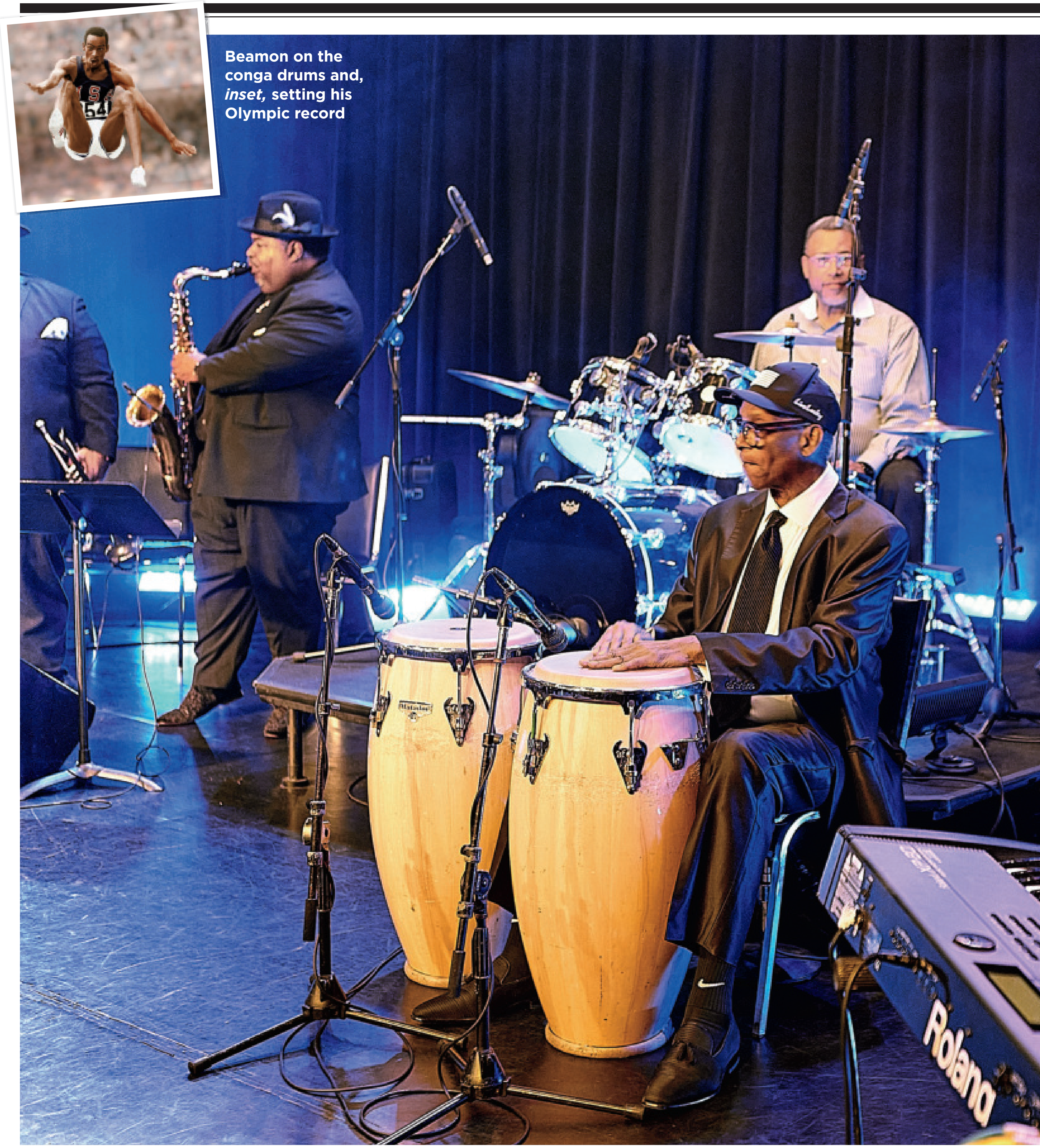

Beamon on the conga drums and, *inset,* setting his Olympic record

Inspiring stories of friends and neighbors, in their own words

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MANY DECADES AFTER THE BATTLE, A VIETNAM HERO GETS HIS DUE P. 73
HER BOOKSTORE'S ON WHEELS P. 74

Ed Lacey/Getty Images

The Jumping Jazzman

From Record-Setting Athlete to Recording Artist

Olympic long jump legend Bob Beamon on returning to his first passion: music

THE KEY TO LEARNING something new is total commitment. You've got to shut out the part of your brain that finds excuses. It's like when I was getting ready to take my long jump in the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. I'd worked hard, and it was my time to perform well. I won a gold medal that day and set an Olympic record—8.90 meters (29 feet, 2.5 inches)—that hasn't been broken yet.

But my first passion was not sports; it was percussion. When I was around 9, I asked my family to get me a pair of bongos, and I taught myself. I would play with my friends, just banging on whatever we could find to make a sound.

At the same time, I was doing well in track and field and basketball. It got to the point where I thought, *OK, I've got to make a choice, and it's going to be sports.*

I never forgot music, though. I was always surrounded by it: I have a collection of 8,000 albums. About three years ago, I contacted my cousin Al Brisbane, the bassist with the band Stix Bones and the BONE Squad, and said, "I need to make music again." He introduced me to Stix Bones, the band's leader, who agreed to help me get my hands back in shape. I worked with Stix and Bobby Thomas Jr., who played with Weather Report, three to four hours a day for a year.

Then Stix invited me to make an album with the band. In my honor, they called it *Olimpik Soul*. It's jazz mixed in with hip-hop and a lot of other beats. The album came out last year.

Even though I had to work hard to get to where I am musically, I can't say I ever got frustrated. I would use mistakes to think about how I could be better. Music is bigger than me. I'm always trying to be as big in my playing as what I can hear in my head. *—As told to Beth Levine*

Bob Beamon, 79, who is also a graphic artist, lives in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

PHOTOGRAPH BY PATRICK JAMES MILLER

The Cobbler Who Charms the Internet

How Jim McFarland found social media fame by sharing his family's craft

HE'S KNOWN online now as "America's cobbler," but in college, Jim McFarland had no interest in joining his father's shoe repair business. The small chain of Lakeland, Florida, shops "felt like a family curse," recalls McFarland, 61. "It's not an easy way to make a living." But then his father became ill, and McFarland left college at age 20 to lend a hand while he recovered. "I loved my dad more than anything in the world," McFarland says. "I had no choice. I had to help him."

McFarland eventually took over one of the shops, becoming his family's fourth generation in the trade. Today that shop is the last part of the family business still standing, and McFarland has ridden his profession to social media success. As of this writing, his TikTok account, America's Cobbler, has 1.3 million followers and over 26 million likes. (He also has large followings on Instagram and YouTube.) He's a fierce advocate for investing in well-made shoes and learning how to take care of them.

McFarland is a fourth-generation shoe mender.

"If more people bought good quality shoes, they could rebuild them many times over," he says.

McFarland's TikTok presence started a few years back, when his daughter, Victoria, decided to create an account for him. His first video, in which he shows how to put toeplates on a shoe, debuted in March 2021 and was an instant hit. (Victoria still shoots his videos.)

"I figured some people may just find the craft itself to be cool or informative," Victoria says. "I definitely did not expect people to find it so satisfying to watch."

The videos cover a lot of ground, demonstrating such skills as replacing soles and adding new heels. In comments, viewers compare McFarland's repairs to "a piece of art" and claim the videos relax them.

"This really calms me down for hard times," one person commented.

McFarland estimates that he has repaired close to half a million shoes during his career. But even he has encountered the occasional shoe that's too far gone to save.

"I've got three pairs of boots in my shop right now that would take an absolute divine miracle to repair," McFarland says with a laugh. "That's the hardest part of my job sometimes, telling a customer that their shoes can't be fixed." People can get emotional when they learn it's the end of the line for their treasured footwear, he says. "Sometimes the only hope I can give people is, 'Well, at least your shoe has a sole, so it'll probably go to heaven.'" —*Eric Spitznagel*

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To watch McFarland work, visit aarp.org/jimmcfarland or scan this code.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ZACK WITTMAN

A Medal of Honor, Long Overdue

U.S. Army veteran Dwight W. Birdwell on waiting more than 50 years to receive full recognition for his courage in battle

Birdwell wearing the Medal of Honor. *Inset, at left:* With fellow soldiers, 1967.

Courtes U.S. Department of Defense/Dwight Birdwell

I AM HESITANT to talk about what happened that day—January 31, 1968. A lot of brave men lost their lives or were gravely wounded. At Tan Son Nhut Air Base near Saigon, we were two platoons, no more than 80 U.S. Army troops total, facing at least 1,000 Vietcong soldiers who were trying to capture the base. In the fighting, one of our platoons was completely wiped out. Those of us who were left in the other platoon received fire from both sides. My tank commander was seriously wounded, so I took charge. At one point, I ran through gunfire to collect more ammunition from disabled vehicles. I was wounded in my face and torso, but our platoon was able to keep the enemy at bay until help arrived. Then we gained the upper hand and secured the safety of the air base—and Saigon itself.

My commanding officer on that day, Lt. Col. Glenn Otis, let me know that he was going to initiate a process for me to be considered for the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest honor for valor in battle. But before he could complete the process, he was gravely wounded and evacuated. I was awarded the Silver Star, which is nothing to sneeze at. But it's not the same thing.

I am a citizen of the Cherokee Nation. I got a lot of flak for that in Vietnam. People said, "Don't give him firewater or he'll go crazy" or "He'll scalp us while we're sleeping." Along with Mexican soldiers and Black soldiers, I faced this kind of prejudice again and again. And I had to wonder whether the color of my skin had anything to do with my not getting put in for the Medal of Honor.

When I got back to the States, I was surprised by the attitude of a lot of people I encountered. Compared to veterans of Korea, WWII and WWI, it was a cold reception.

In 1981, I met up with Glenn Otis, who was then a four-star general. He asked what had happened with the Medal of Honor. When I told him, "Nothing," he said, "Someday, we're going to have that corrected." Later on, he initiated the process, and he designated a retired major named Jerry Headley to see it through in the event of his death. Otis died in 2013, but Headley and a Vietnam vet named Bob Pedigo kept working on the medal process, which is really rigorous. Finally, in 2022, I was awarded the medal by President Joe Biden.

I was very, very honored that day, and I still am. Having the medal has changed my outlook somewhat. It has helped to offset some of the bitterness of the past.

But I must say, as honored as I am: The medal is really for the guys who were killed that day, the guys who were seriously wounded, and their families. I will never forget them or what they sacrificed. I'm the one who received the medal, but it belongs to them too. *—As told to A.J. Baime*

Former U.S. Army Specialist 5 Dwight W. Birdwell, 77, is a retired attorney in Oklahoma.

❗ **Visit aarp.org/veterans for information on veterans' benefits and resources.**

PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL NOBLE JR

The Bookstore That Comes to You

Rita Collins never dreamed how far her traveling shop would take her

PEOPLE TOLD me it wouldn't work. My small town of Eureka, Montana, didn't have a bookstore, so in 2014 I took a course on how to start one. Day one, they said, "A town of 1,400 won't support a book business unless you already own a building on Main Street." I didn't, so I started brainstorming—and landed on the idea of a traveling used-book store.

Within six months, I'd found a used van. Friends designed and built the shelves. I asked everybody I knew for book donations—that's how I get most of my stock. I didn't have a business plan. I thought, *Worst case, I'll sell the van.* I called it St. Rita's Amazing Traveling Bookstore and Textual Apothecary. The "Rita" isn't me, though. She's one of the patron saints of impossible causes.

At first, I set up around my county. Before I knew it, I was in Indiana, Tennessee, South Dakota, California. I've logged more than 100,000 miles in nearly 40 states, almost always staying with friends or friends of friends.

If the van could talk, I think she'd say she feels intrepid, going to all these places. And meeting all these people! The kindergartner who insisted she was going to learn to read before first grade. The cop I thought was going to write me a ticket until he quietly asked, "Do you have any Louis L'Amour books?" (I did.)

Last year, I traded in my van for a newer one. It fits 700 books. Hardbacks are $9, paperbacks are $7, kids' books a dollar. I like to keep it simple. A customer once asked, "You do realize this is a first edition of *Dune*?" I said, "I'm happy for you."

Reading can bridge divides between us. It opens our mind to travel, spirituality, languages, cooking, fantasy worlds. I love that my van invites people in, sparks conversations. I'm basically just covering my costs, but I'm very glad when someone finds a book that speaks to them.

Collins, set up for business in Baltimore

Sometimes people like to dwell on things they did in the past. What I love about this bookstore adventure is that it's about what's ahead. As long as we're alive, we have a chance to make new stories to tell. *—As told to David Hochman*

Retired teacher Rita Collins, 74, recently relocated to Baltimore. Her 2026 plans include a bookshop trip through Alabama and the Carolinas.

PHOTOGRAPH BY LAWREN SIMMONS

BrainGames

PUZZLES BY STANLEY NEWMAN

1	2	3	■	4	5	6	7	■	8	9	10	11
12			■	13				■	14			
15			16					17				
■	■	■	18			■	19			■	■	■
20	21	22		■	■	23			■	24	25	26
27				28	29				30			
31			■	32			■	■	33			
■	■	■	34			■	35	36		■	■	■
37	38	39				40				41	42	43
44				■	45				■	46		
47				■	48				■	49		

CROSSWORD

Albert's Adage

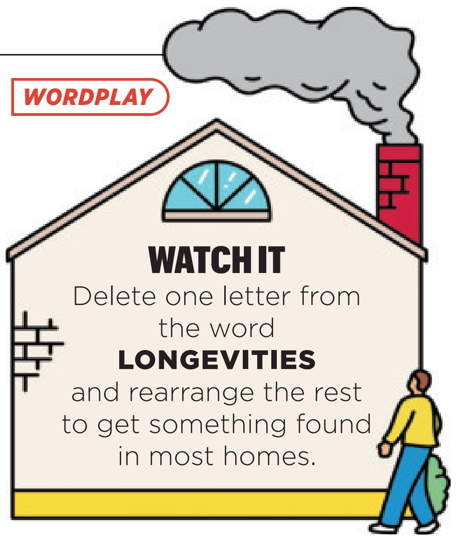
ACROSS

1 Twitch
4 Russian or Ukrainian speaker
8 Autobahn autos
12 Canary
13 A captain or a clown fish
14 Princess-turned-general
15 Start of an Albert Einstein quote
18 Identification introduction
19 You don't want it on your face
20 LG appliance
23 6 companions on your phone
24 Unruly hair
27 Middle of Einstein quote
31 Filthy home
32 Newsstand buy
33 Carpet coverage
34 Metallic tooth
35 Barrel wood
37 End of Einstein quote
44 Chef's seasoning
45 Cube inventor Rubik
46 Office assignment
47 Corporate officer
48 Experiment
49 Weep

DOWN

1 Endurance sport, for short
2 "____ Woman" (classic Helen Reddy anthem)
3 Org. that's in The Loop?
4 Bad mood
5 SLR attachment
6 Reddit Q&A
7 Be a naysayer
8 Place for personal posts
9 Tub trio of rhyme
10 Xbox alternative
11 Carrier to Copenhagen
16 Telethon urging
17 Horror film servant
20 Royal Navy designation
21 Tiny part of URLs
22 Take a taste of
23 Stat for a Silverado, say
24 Scratch up
25 Small bill
26 Book fair sponsor
28 "Don't worry about me"
29 Attractive souvenir?
30 Confiscate
34 Business channel
35 Has bought
36 Often
37 Not just any
38 Bit of spelling?
39 Consist of
40 Crude metal
41 CD spinners
42 Sticky stuff
43 Slack off

WORDPLAY



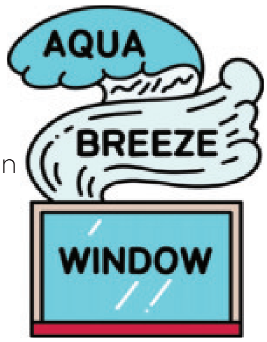
WATCH IT

Delete one letter from the word **LONGEVITIES** and rearrange the rest to get something found in most homes.

THINK

COMMON SENSE

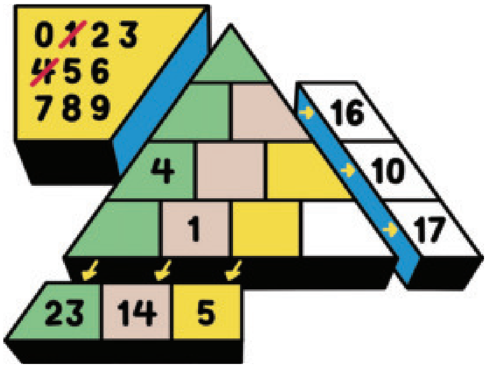
What five-letter word can be found in the dictionary definitions of these three words?



NUMBER FUN

PYRAMID SCHEME

Place each of the eight unused digits from 0 to 9 in the blank blocks so that the numbers in the three bottom rows and the three highlighted diagonal columns add up to the indicated sums.



AARP.ORG/BRAINHEALTH
Up-to-date news, resources and tips on dementia and cognitive health

Illustrations by Sam Island

All puzzle solutions on page 83

1 in every 3 older adults struggle to meet their basic needs.

Too many older adults face impossible choices: pay for food or fill a prescription? Pay the rent or keep the heat on? AARP Foundation is here to help with programs and other resources so older adults with low income are no longer just getting by — they're actually getting ahead.

Learn how you can help at aarpfoundation.org/thrive

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FOR YOU *Read inspiring stories of veterans fulfilling lifelong dreams at wishofalifetime.org*

Your AARP®

Purpose Prize Winners

Honoring older Americans who spend their lives helping others

SIX OLDER Americans who have made important contributions to building a better world have been named the winners of the AARP Purpose Prize award, which recognizes nonprofit founders age 50 and up. Each recipient's organization will receive $75,000 from AARP and a year of support to grow their organization.

The winners will be honored at a celebration in Washington, D.C., in late October.

Jacquelyn Thomas, 62

Kids in Technology, *Memphis*

This organization provides hands-on learning experiences to youths in science, math and reading. It also offers tutoring for students in Memphis-area schools and runs weekend programs designed to help attract students to science, technology, math and engineering.

Larry McCord, 73

CHADS Coalition for Mental Health, *St. Louis*

Founded in memory of McCord's son who took his own life, CHADS trains students, parents and counselors to prevent suicide and provides counseling for youths and young adults. The organization's programming has been shown to reduce depression symptoms.

Ilyssa Manspeizer, 59

Landforce, *Pittsburgh*

This career development enterprise offers paid training and work experience in land conservation and environmental restoration. Crew members work on conservation projects around the Pittsburgh area, receive one-on-one career coaching and learn other skills.

Hal Garman, 89, and Spence Limbocker, 82

Gaithersburg Beloved Community Initiative, *Gaithersburg, Maryland*

GBCI runs mentorship programs between older adults and local students and an English language program for adults. The organization also advocates for community improvements, such as the rebuilding of a local school.

Aaron Casillas, 54

Mycelia Foundation, *Las Cruces, New Mexico*

Mycelia Foundation builds affordable broadband infrastructure for older Americans and others in underserved areas of New Mexico. Its Digital Navigator program also provides bilingual training, free laptops and ongoing technical assistance.

To find out more, visit aarp.org/purposeprize, or scan this code with your phone.

Clockwise from top left: William Deshazer; Greg Kahn; Cassidy Araiza; Stephen Voss, Jennifer Silverberg

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[1] **In Texas, the Auto program is underwritten by Redpoint County Mutual Insurance Company through Hartford of the Southeast General Agency, Inc. Hartford Fire Insurance Company and its affiliates are not financially responsible for insurance products underwritten and issued by Redpoint County Mutual Insurance Company.**

[2] Average annual savings are derived from 6-month policy terms and based on information reported by customers who switched to The Hartford's newest rate plan between 9/1/22 and 8/31/23. Your savings may vary. Rate differences for AARP members and non-members vary by state and AARP membership tenure. [3] Terms and conditions may apply. **Accident Forgiveness is not available to CA policyholders.** [4] Gift is a limited time offer and not available in all states. Email address required in most states. Allow 4-7 weeks for delivery. Bottle not included.

*Based on customer experience reviews shared online at www.thehartford.com/aarp/car-insurance/reviews as of January 2024.

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HOW WE'RE FIGHTING FOR YOU

AARP TAKES ON FRAUD

OLDER Americans consistently rate being defrauded as one of their greatest fears. And with good reason. The Federal Trade Commission put an eye-popping number to it: In 2023, scammers stole as much as $158.3 billion from Americans. That's $434 million a day, or about $300,000 every minute.

For AARP, combating this scourge is a top priority.

The AARP Fraud Watch Network continues to blanket the country with education on fraud prevention through hundreds of state-office volunteer fraud fighters who reach tens of thousands of people in local communities every year. We also produce our award-winning podcast, *The Perfect Scam,* and send biweekly "Watchdog Alerts" to more than 400,000 subscribers. Go to **aarp.org/fraudwatchnetwork** to learn more.

The Fraud Watch Network has a free helpline for those who want to check if something is a scam or get help after being defrauded. Call the helpline at **877-908-3360**. And find emotional support at **aarp.org/fraud support** through our Fraud Victim Support online group discussions.

AARP is also working to change the way people think about fraud.

▶ We cofounded the new National Elder Fraud Coordination Center (**fightelderfraud.org**), which coordinates intelligence gathering to bring criminals to justice.

▶ Our fraud experts serve on the Aspen Institute's National Task Force on Fraud and Scam Prevention to establish the first-ever national fraud strategy.

▶ We worked with lawmakers to pass legislation in 15 states to help prevent fraud through cryptocurrency ATMs. And we successfully pushed for laws to stop gift-card scams in 10 states.

▶ AARP is advocating for laws to help victims recover their losses through victim restitution funds.

▶ We are also shifting the perspective on victimization (**aarp.org/saythis**) by spreading awareness that being defrauded is not the victim's fault.

▶ AARP has launched a campaign to create a formula for recognizing and responding to scams: "Pause. Reflect. Protect." Go to **aarp.org/fraudwatchnetwork** to learn more.

▶ And AARP launched a new video series, *Fraud Wars,* which shares victims' stories to highlight the sophisticated tactics used in fraud. Go to **youtube.com/aarp** to find episodes. ***—Kathy Stokes, director of fraud prevention programs with the AARP Fraud Watch Network***

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From top: Getty Images; FEVO. Illustration by Rob Dobi

SYLVESTER STALLONE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 41

‘Life Is a Matter of Addition and Subtraction’

In a twist worthy of a screenplay, Stallone and Flavin were having dinner in Mexico on New Year’s Eve 2004 when film producer Joe Roth came to the table. Roth was interested in working with Flavin, who’d become a star on the Home Shopping Network. Stallone, with his habitual determination, mentioned he’d written a new *Rocky* script and gave a copy to Roth, who liked it and asked his wife for her opinion.

SS: *A week later, Joe calls. “My wife read it, and she cried. I’ll do it.” All’s well that ends well. I wish the original* Rocky *producers well. I mean, if Al Pacino said to me, “I’m 82, and I want to play Michael Corleone,” I’d go … no. But I had no other choice.*

I knew another fight movie was not a good idea, but it’s not about fighting. It’s about grief, loss. Because life is a matter of addition and subtraction. But once you hit 50, it’s all about subtraction, and you lose the most precious things. And for Rocky, he lost a life with Adrian. So Rocky didn’t know how to purge himself of this grief, except through flagellation, getting hit, to replace old pain with new pain. He had survivor’s guilt, and that’s what the whole story was about. I mean, I never explained it this way to anyone, but that’s what it was.

‘I Want to Let Loose the Reins’

After the success of *Rocky Balboa* in 2006, Stallone largely went back to the comfort of self-determination: He made a fourth *Rambo* movie; launched the *Expendables* action-thriller franchise, making three of them in five years; revived the Rocky character in two *Creed* films, playing Michael B. Jordan’s reluctant trainer; and did a fifth *Rambo* movie. He also did voice work, mostly making fun of his persona, notably in *The Suicide Squad* and *Zookeeper*. Then, in 2022, he jumped into Paramount+’s *Tulsa King*, created by Taylor Sheridan, of *Yellowstone* fame, and starring Stallone as an exiled New York mob capo who has recently served 25 years in prison and is, to his extreme displeasure, shipped off to Oklahoma, with instructions from his crime boss to develop sources of illegal income in the Sooner State.

The role has Stallone thinking hard about mortality and the legacy he has built, as a man, a filmmaker and, in the end, as an actor, giving life to a collection of indelible characters who persevere against all odds.

SS: *A streaming series was untilled soil for me. It’s much faster than film, and you have to learn much more dialogue, at least my character. To play the role, I just thought,* I am now a gangster, but I will retain my personality, my mores, my interpretation of life. *That’s a fresh take on that cliché character. I think the hardest thing to do is to pretend you’re something else. It becomes very mannered and actorish. Basically, what you see up there is me as a gangster.*

But Father Time’s got me by one leg; he’s holding on. I think about it quite often. I’m 79-plus. So I want to let loose of the reins a little bit. For the first two seasons, I was monitoring almost every facet of Tulsa King, *every character, dialogue, this and that. Starting at 3:30 or 4 in the morning and rewriting every freaking page. It doesn’t turn off. And I never want to go through that again. So I’ve delegated everything to the head writer, and I want to spend more time with my family.*

The fate of my character? Well, he’s not going to be shot. He’s not going to be run over. He’s not going to find a lump in his neck and that’s the end. Every gangster goes out on a stretcher. I want this guy, because he already suffered for 25 years keeping his mouth shut, to actually revel in the fact that he went out as a success and didn’t face any kind of death threat or demise.

None of my characters have ever died. None. ■

Writer Rob Tannenbaum contributes to The New York Times *and other publications. His last story for* AARP The Magazine *was on Rod Stewart.*

With additional reporting by Caitlin Rossmann

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B. Paid circulation		
1. Mailed outside-county paid subscriptions	21,929,290	21,653,949
2. Mailed in-county paid subscriptions	none	none
3. Paid distribution outside mails including sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, counter sales and other paid distribution outside USPS	6,187	4,873
4. Paid distribution by other classes of mail through the USPS	none	none
C. Total paid distribution (sum of B.1, B.2, B.3 and B.4)	21,935,477	21,658,822
D. Free or nominal-rate distribution		
1. Free or nominal-rate outside-county copies	91,527	86,172
2. Free or nominal-rate in-county copies	none	none
3. Free or nominal-rate copies mailed at other classes through the USPS	none	none
4. Free or nominal-rate copies outside the mail	17,015	17,032
E. Total free or nominal-rate distribution (sum of D.1, D.2, D.3 and D.4)	108,542	103,204
F. Total distribution (sum of C and E)	22,044,019	21,762,026
G. Copies not distributed	410	328
H. Total (sum of F and G)	22,044,429	21,762,354
I. Percent paid (C/F x 100)	99.51%	99.53%

This statement will be published in the October–November 2025 issue of this publication. I certify that all information furnished on this statement is true and complete. —Robyn Motley, Senior Vice President, General Manager

INFLATION QUIZ

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

ANSWERS

1. a. 2.7 percent. Answer d., 9.1 percent, is from June 2022 and is the highest U.S. annual inflation rate recorded in the past 40 years.

2. a. Eggs! The cost of a Grade A dozen rose 157 percent from July 2020 to July 2025. Motor vehicle insurance was up 61 percent; regular unleaded gas, 45 percent; and rent, more than 27 percent. Medical care rose only 11.7 percent, but the BLS isn't measuring out-of-pocket costs. Those rose about 18 percent per person from 2020 to 2022 *alone*, according to the Peterson-KFF Health System Tracker.

3. As reported by the website Trading Economics:

Brazil	**5.2%**	Nigeria	**21.9%**
China	**0%**	Russia	**8.8%**
Germany	**2%**	Ukraine	**14.1%**

4. b. 2.9 percent. The BLS warns that this index for older Americans has shortcomings, such as not necessarily reflecting where they shop.

5. c. 49 percent. The figure is 59 percent for households with incomes less than $25,000. As Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas researchers explain, inflation tends to hit low-income households the hardest, partly because a greater share of their income goes toward higher-inflation necessities such as food, gas and rent.

6. c. Paper products. The good news, says the BLS: Although shrinkflation may grab your attention, it has a one-hundredth of 1 percent impact on the inflation rate.

7. False. When prices rise, each dollar you repay your lender is worth less than it was when you got your loan. You, the borrower, benefit in a way from inflation: As your other expenses rise, your fixed monthly payments cost you relatively less.

8. c. They hardly changed them at all. Regarding inflation, Americans appear to be pessimists.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!

We greatly value your feedback about AARP The Magazine—including what you'd like us to cover next. Here are several ways to send us your comments on stories, and to offer your suggestions for topics, people, trends and issues to report on in future issues of the magazine. While we read (and listen) carefully to all submissions, due to the high volume we cannot respond to every question or return submitted materials.

U.S. Mail: AARP The Magazine, 601 E St. NW, Washington, DC 20049

Email: aarpmagazine@aarp.org

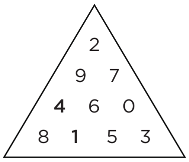
Phone: 888-687-2277 or international callers: 202-434-3525 **Social:** @AARP

CREDITS: TOC Page 4: *Clockwise from top:* Tara Anand; Patrick James Miller; Sean McCabe (Amy Sussman/Getty Images); Courtesy Emma Heming Willis; Glenn Harvey; Tomi Um; Will Brinson; WireImage/Getty Images for Ralph Lauren. *Center:* The Rocky Mountaineer. **Sly Stallone's 15 Most Memorable Moments Page 38:** *From left:* Columbia Pictures/Photofest; United Artists/Courtesy Everett Collection. **Page 39:** *From left:* Universal Pictures/Photofest; Orion/Courtesy Everett Collection; Warner Brothers/Courtesy Everett Collection. **Page 40:** *From left:* Warner Brothers/Courtesy Everett Collection; TriStar Pictures/Courtesy Everett Collection. **Page 41:** *From left:* Lionsgate/Courtesy Everett Collection; Warner Brothers/Courtesy Everett Collection; Paramount+/Viacom/Courtesy Everett Collection. **All Aboard! Page 54:** Courtesy Amtrak. **Page 55:** Courtesy Laura Kiniry. **Pages 56-57:** *Clockwise from top left:* Courtesy Rocky Mountaineer; Courtesy Glacier Express; Courtesy Amtrak; Courtesy La Dolce Vita Orient Express, Italy; Courtesy Great Journeys, New Zealand; Courtesy Alaska Railroad; Courtesy VIA Rail The Canadian; Courtesy Amtrak. **Page 58:** Courtesy Amtrak (3). **Page 59:** *Clockwise from center:* Courtesy The Polar Express Train Ride, California State Railroad Museum (2); Courtesy The Holiday Express, South Dakota; The Candy Cane Express; Virginia & Truckee Railroad; Courtesy North Pole Express, Michigan. **Big 5-Oh Page 88** Kate Winslet primary photo: Amy Sussman/Getty Images. *Clockwise from top right:* BFA/Neon/Alamy; Kevin Winter/Getty Images; DreamWorks/Everett Collection; 20th Century Fox Film Corp/Everett Collection; Focus Features/Everett Collection; Mary Evans/Columbia Pictures/Ronald Grant/Everett Collection; Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures/Everett Collection. Lennon: Steve Granitz/FilmMagic/Getty Images. Ortiz: Paul Archuleta/Getty Images. Stiller: Arturo Holmes/WireImage/Getty Images. Ma: Horacio Villalobos/Corbis/Getty Images. Goldberg: John Lamparski/Getty Images.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES ON PAGE 75

T	I	C	■	S	L	A	V	■	B	M	W	S
R	A	T	■	N	E	M	O	■	L	E	I	A
I	M	A	G	I	N	A	T	I	O	N	I	S
■	■	■	I	T	S	■	E	G	G	■	■	■
H	D	T	V	■	■	M	N	O	■	M	O	P
M	O	R	E	I	M	P	O	R	T	A	N	T
S	T	Y	■	M	A	G	■	■	A	R	E	A
■	■	■	C	O	G	■	O	A	K	■	■	■
T	H	A	N	K	N	O	W	L	E	D	G	E
H	E	R	B	■	E	R	N	O	■	J	O	B
E	X	E	C	■	T	E	S	T	■	S	O	B

WATCH IT: TELEVISION
COMMON SENSE: LIGHT



PYRAMID SCHEME: The numbers from 0 to 9 add up to 45. If you add up the totals for the bottom three rows of the pyramid, you get 43. Therefore the number in the top block must be 2. The sum of the three shaded diagonals is 42, so 3 must be in the unshaded box. Then, for the leftmost diagonal to total 23, the two missing numbers must be 9 and 8; for the second row's total to be 16, the missing numbers must be 9 and 7. So 9 goes between 2 and 4, next to 9 goes 7, and 8 is at bottom left. After 5 fills out the bottom row, 0 and 6 are easy to place.

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Kate Winslet

(OCTOBER 5): The British actor is more than a *Titanic* movie star. She's also a six-time Oscar nominee, with one win (best actress for *The Reader*).

INDIE SPIRIT: Following the global success of *Titanic*, Winslet opted for roles in smaller films, such as *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*.

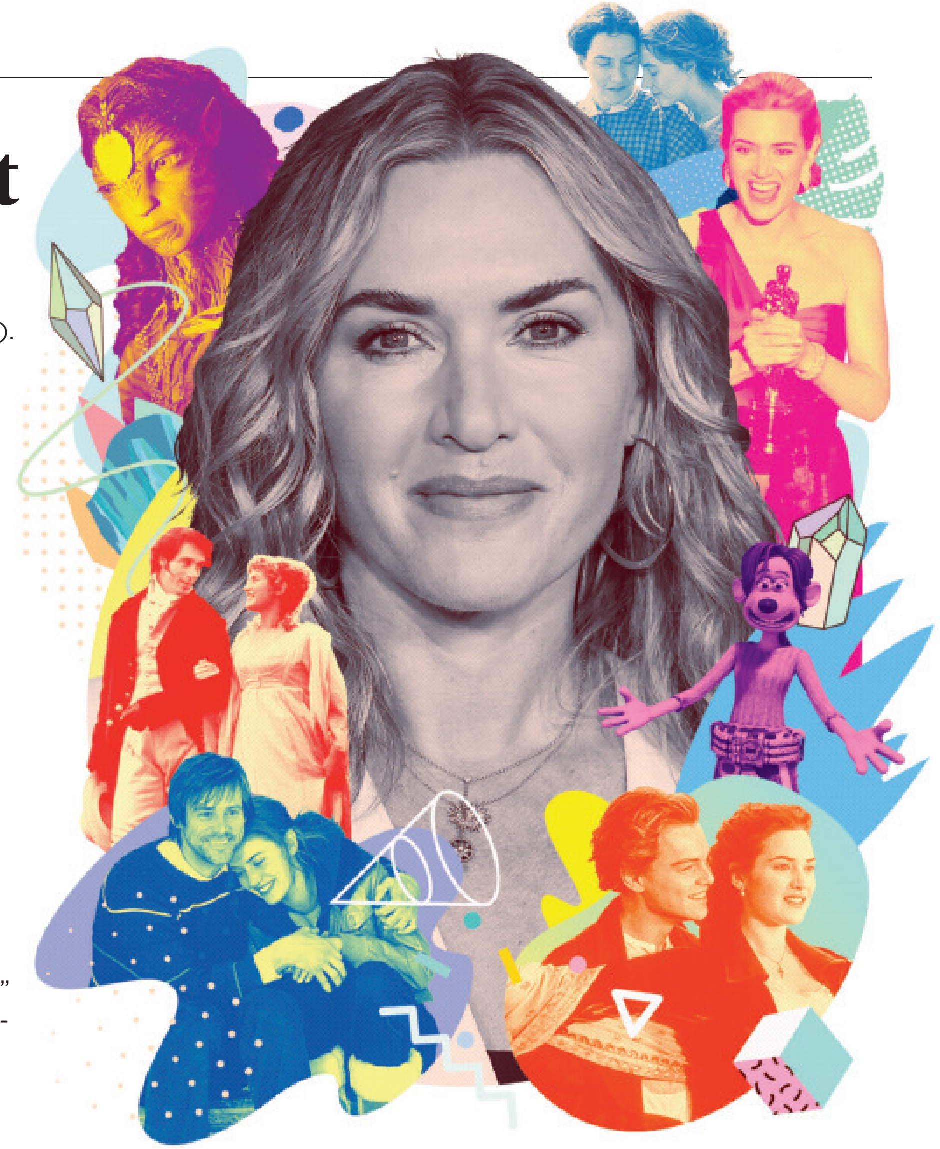
MAKING A DIFFERENCE: After narrating the 2009 documentary *A Mother's Courage: Talking Back to Autism*, Winslet cofounded the nonprofit Golden Hat Foundation, which works to change perceptions of people with autism, and coauthored *The Golden Hat: Talking Back to Autism.*

★ $2.3 ★ BILLION

The worldwide gross of *Titanic*

NEW CHALLENGE: Winslet will make her directorial debut and star in *Goodbye June*, a drama written by her 21-year-old son, Joe Anders.

BIRTHDAY PLANS: "I want to spend the year doing 50 remarkable things," Winslet told *Harper's Bazaar*, "whether that's a particular hike I've never done or acts of kindness. I'm gathering a little list." *—Whitney Matheson*



MORE MILESTONE BIRTHDAYS

Sean Lennon
OCTOBER 9
Musician (and John's son) released a new song with two other Beatles descendants.

50

David Ortiz
NOVEMBER 18
Retired Red Sox star, known as Big Papi, is a proud father. Son D'Angelo plays pro ball.

50

Ben Stiller
NOVEMBER 30
Comedic actor reprised his role in Adam Sandler's *Happy Gilmore 2*, released this year.

60

Yo-Yo Ma
OCTOBER 7
Celebrated classical musician prefers to play an 18th-century cello nicknamed Petunia.

70

Whoopi Goldberg
NOVEMBER 13
The View cohost and actor has cofounded the All Women's Sports Network.

70

Goldie Hawn
NOVEMBER 21
Actor remains active in MindUP, a children's mental health organization she founded.

80

Photo credits and information on page 83

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